

**Social Organization on the Web: How Sex workers Rights Organizations
Engage in Activism and Advocacy Work Online**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine how sex workers rights organizations use their websites as a site of activist and advocacy work and ask (i) how do various organizations conceptualize sex work on their websites, and to what extent do they incorporate an intersectional feminist perspective? (ii) what communication strategies are used by the four organizations to target audiences in the viewing public? (iii) what audiences do the four websites target? (iv) how do the four organizations discuss successes and challenges on their websites? (v) in what ways do sex worker right organizations use websites to further their goals?

The websites of Maggie's, POWER, and Stella attempt to embrace an intersectional feminist perspective of sex work, while PACE does not. The four organizations strategically use their websites to target audiences with diverse needs, specifically through advocacy efforts in educating the general public about the legitimacy of sexual labour. Additionally, to increase the use of the websites by sex workers, using social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter augment the untapped potential for creating action, mobilization, interaction, and dialogue on the websites.

Key Words: *sex worker, advocacy, activism, sex work, websites*

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Chapter 1: Sex Workers Use of Websites

1.0.0 Introduction

In the past several decades the ways in which individuals and organizations communicate with one another have been transformed. Most notably, a wide variety of social media options have emerged globally. As a social researcher interested in the prospects for social justice and progressive social change, I am exploring the way four Canadian sex workers' rights organizations have utilized new social media, specifically, websites, as a site of activist and advocacy work.

In my thesis, I pose one overarching research question asking: how do sex worker rights organizations use their websites as a site of activist and advocacy work? In addressing this question, I generated five research queries. I look at i) how do various organizations conceptualize sex work on their websites and to what extent do they incorporate an intersectional feminist perspective? ii) what communication strategies are used by the four organizations to target audiences in the viewing public? iii) What audiences do the four websites target? iv) how do the four organizations discuss successes and challenges on their websites? and v) in what ways do sex worker rights organizations appear to use websites to further their goals?

There are three bodies of information relevant to addressing the use of websites by sex worker rights organizations: i) social movements and social change; ii) social movements and dissemination of information; and iii) the history of sex

work in Canada. In this chapter, I examine these three bodies of literature, followed by the contributions of my research and an outline of the chapters to come.

1.1.0 Social Movements and Social Change

Social movements involve “a set of people who voluntarily and deliberately commit themselves to a shared identity, a unifying belief, a common program, and a collective struggle to realize that program” (Tilly, 2008, p.186) and are based on cultural claims (Touraine, 2002). They are a “sustained series of interactions between power holders and persons successfully claiming to speak on behalf of a constituency lacking formal representation ... [and] make publicly visible demands for changes” (Tilly, 2008, p. 187-188).

Throughout history, many social movements arose in the wake of social problems or in efforts to create new social order. Social movements emerge as an answer to a threat or as a goal of a social group in order to create change (Touraine, 2002). Kuumba (2001) argues that social movements oriented politically on the left are typically associated with progressive social change that aims to foster more equal rights. These include such movements as movements for workers’ rights and union movements in the 1930’s, national liberation from colonizers throughout the 1950s and 1960s around the world, socialist movements in Latin and Central America in the 1970’s through 1980’s, and many gender, race, class, sexuality based civil rights movements throughout the US and Canada (Kuumba, 2001; Snow, Archer, & Eklund-Olsen, 1980; Touraine, 2002). However, not all movements are progressive, indeed some are conservative. Kuumba (2001) suggests that right-winged movements focus on reestablishing or maintaining a threatened way of life.

Some examples include racist movements that push back on anti-discriminatory legislation, racial segregation, fascist movements, and restricting abortion access for women (Kuumba, 2011).

The defining features of social movements include organization and structure, non-institutionalized strategies, collective consciousness that connects social grievances with rational action, and a lengthy duration (Kuumba, 2001). According to Kuumba, “movement organizations and participants have belief systems and/or ideologies that explain the nature of the social condition they seek to change, justify the particular strategies of action, and outline the anticipated outcomes or objectives” (2001, p. 5). By engaging in forms of collective action, social movements work to create new opportunities, bring people together, and engage in sustained action with opponents of the movement (Tarrow, 2008). These characteristics differentiate social movements from other forms of group behaviour, like riots or mobs, panics, or fashions (Kuumba, 2001; Touraine 2008).

Tarrow (2008) argues that, while movements are typically conceived to be outside of institutions, through their opposition they become involved in policy networks and with actors of the state. Actions taken by social movements are rooted in the social context of the broader society they occur in, therefore strategies of resistance must balance between the conditions of the social movement and the environment in which the movement takes place (Minkoff, 1993 cited in Kuumba, 2001; Touraine, 2002). Social movements are remembered most by the prominently visible actions they have taken that receive the most attention in the media and the academy, as this attention will help define the movement in collective memory

(Kuumba, 2001). The response from people outside the movement, both in the power structure and the general public, impacts the extent of social change created by the movement (Kuumba, 2001).

1.1.1 The Women's Movement in Canada

My exploration of Canadian sex workers rights organizations is situated in an understanding of the women's movements in Canada. Hamilton (2005) highlights how the women's movements in Canada have been active since the 1960s and such movements are political, aiming to change "social hierarchies, law, policies, and distribution of resources" (p.37). Throughout the 20th century, organizations such as the YWCA, the National Council of Women, the Business and Professional Women's Club, and the University Women's Clubs all called on the Canadian government to improve the lives of women at home, at work, and to afford women equal rights (Hamilton, 2005; see Black 1993; Lavigne, Pinard & Stoddart, 1979). The women's movements have aimed to eliminate the ambiguity around women's roles and were initiated by women who rejected stereotypical assumptions of what it meant to be a woman (Evans, 2008), such as being a homemaker or caretaker.

The women's movement in Canada has been fragmented from the start, mainly along the division of four major issues, as noted by Hamilton (2005). First, Hamilton highlights Black's (1993) finding that there was an early divide in the movement among radical and liberal feminists. Second, English speaking Canadians and Quebecois francophones were divided. Quebecois feminists encompassed their desire for a Quebec independent of the Canadian state with their feminist movement (Hamilton, 2005). Third, post-1970, struggles among feminists regarding sexual

orientation became forefront as lesbians involved in the movement argued for greater recognition of their lived experiences and participation in the movement (Hamilton, 2005). Finally, women of colour, such as black women and Aboriginal women, challenged the racism embedded in the notion of a universal women's experience in order to fight discrimination they face (Hamilton, 2005).

The second wave feminist movements in the 1960's and 1970's fought for new rights such as access to abortion, protection from workplace harassment and other forms of violence, equity in the workplace, and brought forth the idea that the personal is political (Hamilton, 2005; Edelman, 2001). A personalized approach to politics helped to proliferate the agenda of new feminist groups (Evans, 2008). Activists during this period, and during the previous periods, were subject to many risks such as arrests, ruined careers, and beatings from police for their involvement in activist struggles (Edelman, 2001). Third wave feminists, active after the 1990's, have embraced sexual politics and cultural issues as a site of struggle "seeking to fuel micro-political struggles outside of formal institutional channels" (Edelman, 2001, p. 295). Third wave feminists, Mann and Huffman (2005) suggest, are embracing a resistance to categorizations and identities, embracing fluidity, and fostering diversity.

The growth of feminist action greatly effected political institutions (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003 cited in Mann & Hoffman, 2005; Evans, 2008). As Dicker and Piepmeier (2003) point out, feminist engagement should be political in ways that are transformative on two levels, individually and societally (cited in Mann & Huffman, 2005), for example the understanding of the personal is political.

Feminists urged reform of legislation that treated men and women differently or discriminated against women directly, with the goal of changing legislation as well as educating and changing attitudes about women (Hamilton, 2005). This demonstrates how lobbying and other forms of direct action are major ways in which the women's movement would make public demands of the government (Hamilton, 2005). Hamilton suggests that these strategies are the most visible for feminist movements in transforming society.

Many successes achieved by feminist activists in the 1970s and 1980s, such as the creation of women's centres to assist women in trouble, were cut short in the 1990s as a result of government cutbacks to social spending, increasing the number of women living in poverty (Hamilton, 2005). This is consistent with the introduction of the Harris government, which rolled out a neo-liberal agenda by introducing policies aimed at restructuring social services, and reducing alleged wasteful spending on such services (Anderson, 2013). Hamilton (2005) states that feminist organizations face resistance through "the 'neo-liberal' pro-market world-view that informs ... global restructuring [and] appears antithetical to their commitments and goals" (p.40).

The neoliberal agenda and the Harris cut backs were detrimental to women, among others, and feminist voices contributed to the dissenting literature on the effects of neoliberalism on women (Coulter, 2009 cited in Anderson, 2013). The neoliberal agenda that has permeated Canadian society (and internationally) since the late 1970's has fostered a situation in which individuals and organizations feel it

necessary to respond to in order to combat neoliberal policies dominating the political sphere (Whitmore et al., 2011).

In Canada, sex workers have been organizing to confront the complex working conditions associated with sex work since as early as 1910 when a Jewish-American prostitute Maimie Pinzer opened the doors of an apartment in Montreal's Redlight district to allow other prostitutes a space for respite and socializing with other prostitutes (Crago & Clamen, 2013). For decades, sex workers have organized to address social, political and economic problems such as ambiguous legislation, social stigma, and problematic economic conditions.

In discussions of sex work, there is significant tension among feminists and different feminist perspectives hold very contrasting views. Radical feminism does not embrace sex as work, instead this perspective focuses on prostitution as a way in which male dominance and the oppression of women is reinforced and perpetuated in society (Bromberg, 1997). In this school of thought, radical feminists are not prepared to see prostitution as a form of work (Coy, 2009; Farley, 2004; Jeffreys, 2009). Instead, a radical feminist perspective views prostitution as a form of violence against women, with specific focus on sexual violence. Radical feminists see prostitution not as a necessary function of society, rather as a social construct and behaviour that maintains male dominance but is not necessary for women (Jeffreys, 2009). These feminists also see similarities between the experiences of women working in the sex trade as parallel with those who have been sexually assaulted (Jeffreys, 2009).

In contrast, sex positive feminism is concerned with disconnecting sexual relations from patriarchy and rejecting efforts to censor and stigmatize consensual sexual activity, including sex work (Green, 2013). Sex positive feminists argue for the decriminalization of sex work and sex workers (MacDonald et al., 2013), arguing that viewing sex work as legitimate labour will help create safer working conditions (Sutherland, 2004).

These contrasting perspectives became very apparent in the recent Bedford case. In 2008 a legal challenge to the prostitution laws in Canada was launched in Ontario, arguing that the *Criminal Code of Canada* violates several of the rights and freedoms afforded to all Canadians under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Canadian sex workers rights organizations have thrown their support behind the Bedford case, arguing that the legislation in the *Criminal Code* is unconstitutional and puts sex workers at risk. Some feminist organizations, such as REAL Women of Canada, and religious organizations greatly opposed this decision (Bruckert & Hannem, 2013) as they oppose sex work. This case was appealed all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada where the decision to strike down the provisions in the *Criminal Code* was upheld and changes to the legislation are now in process. Sex worker organizations have been actively advocating for changes to the legislation, for example, several organizations have acted as interveners at various stages of the court process.

1.2.0 Social Movements and Dissemination of Information

Social ties between different social movement actors have always been important to fostering collective identity (Krinsky & Crossley, 2014). Social movement actors must be able to communicate amongst each other in order to coordinate efforts, disseminate information, generate resources, and establish the values and commitments of their social movement (Krinsky & Crossley, 2014) as well as distribute their platforms. Prior to the increase in use of information communication technologies (ICTs), the women's movements in Canada created books, magazines, and newspapers, among other strategies, in order to bring forth the ideas of the women's movement to the public, bypassing traditional gatekeepers to mainstream publication venues (Hamilton, 2005). Additionally, feminists started academic journals, such as *The Canadian Newsletter of Research on Women*, or *Canadian Woman Studies*, in order to disseminate their academic work (Hamilton, 2005). Now, the ways in which social movements and social movement actors communicate has evolved with the emergence of ICTs, which has developed alongside the rise of the internet.

The internet was deployed, on a large scale, in 1989 (Castells, 2011). By 2009, approximately 1.5 billion people were using the internet. Castells argues that, building on the success of the internet, 3.4 billion people have access to mobile phones. As a result of this, the boundaries of mass media, dissemination of information, and other forms of communication are blurring, converging in new mediums such as ICTs (Castells, 2011). Therefore, communication and information processing has been scattered throughout all forms of social life, available instantaneously through a variety of platforms such as computers, smart phones,

tablets, and televisions through rapidly diversifying instruments such as Facebook and Twitter.

Castells (2009) suggests that in the second millennium of the common-era, there were a lot of changes to the social, technological, economic, and cultural aspects of the world that came together to give rise to, what he calls, the network society. He posits that technology is society and society therefore cannot be understood without examining technological tools. The information technology revolution diffused through the material cultures of societies and permeated diverse countries, which resulted, in turn, in an explosion of all kinds of applications and uses that led to more technological innovation, accelerating the speed, widening the scope, and diversifying the use of ICTs as a source of change (Castells, 2011).

Stein (2009) highlights how the internet can serve as a critical resource to social movements as the internet can provide information about movements that is either unavailable from the mainstream media, or counters the information put out in the media. In the last few decades, ICTs have redefined the ways in which people engage with media (Levroux, 2011). Websites allow for social movement organizations to communicate directly with people involved with the organization as well as the general public, removing the mainstream media as a barrier (Stein, 2009). Additionally, Castells discusses the importance of the media as a space of power; one that disseminates political messages en masse (Castells, 2011). He argues that “technology is not simply a tool, it is a medium, it is a social construction, with its own implications” (p 249).

ICTs have rapidly progressed. The original incarnation of web use, what is referred to as Web 1.0, details the classical website that operates in a top-down manner where the organizer of the website provide information to be consumed (van Stekelenburg & Boekkooi, 2013) but with no space for interaction. Web 1.0 saw success but has evolved to what is known as Web 2.0. Web 2.0 incorporates new social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, blogs, and wikis, and the intent is that many different people can produce and exchange information with multiple receivers, through multiple platforms, allowing for the coproduction of content (van Stekelenburg & Boekkooi, 2013). While Web 2.0 is an obvious advancement over Web 1.0, the distinction between the two is not nuanced. Organizers of movements typically use a multiplicity of mobilization channels, including offline and online content, interactive content, or static content (van Stekelenburg & Boekkooi, 2013) in efforts to disseminate their platforms and engage with their audiences.

Social media sites are the most common way for people to enter online activism, as indicated in a survey by DigiActive (Brodock, Joyce & Zaack 2009 cited in Harlow 2011). The internet aids in facilitating offline activism by contributing to the forms of protest that activists have, from online petitions to hacking (Harlow, 2011). The use of ICTs has changed the nature of protest and likely has increased the amount of protest that occurs (Polletta, Chen, Gardner, & Motes, 2013). Additionally, it can contribute to already existing techniques of social movements by connecting the movements with people locally and networks transnationally (Harlow, 2011). Social networking sites, as defined by boyd and Ellison (2007), are online services that allow for the creation of public profiles that allow the user to

network with other users, navigate different profiles, and network with people with shared common interests. Facebook and Twitter, for example, are both free social media platforms that allow for this type of engagement. In what boyd, (cited in Poletta et al., 2013) describes as the “tell a friend” method, social networking sites facilitate action as it is recognized that people are more likely to engage in action when they can see that other people are participating, particularly people they have a connection with. Additionally, friends may persist in pressing other friends on social media to become involved in action (Polletta et al., 2013). With the rise of ICTs, the internet is now best categorized as an interactive platform, based on the increase in social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter and blogs (Harlow, 2011), and its use in activism has become an important resource for many social movements (Rolfe, 2005).

Social movements, Stein (2009) argues, represent a site of “formulating, advancing, and leveraging the interests of civil society against elites and authorities” (p 750). In her work on social movements and web use, Stein (2009) discusses the ways in which websites are important to social movement organizations, as well as ways to study the content of websites. She argues that it is websites that provide social movement organizations the opportunity to present information about their movement, what they stand for, what their goals are, and appeal to audiences both involved with or outside of the movement. Through this analysis, she develops a typology for quantitatively assessing websites. Websites represent a space in which to counter the discourses presented in the mainstream media as well as

communicate the ideologies of the movement to publics, movement allies, the press, and others (Stein, 2009).

Mainstream media presents a perspective of social issues that is arguably inconsistent with how social movement organizations present key social issues, therefore it is necessary for organizations to employ different forms of communication that counter the mainstream media (Castells, 2011; Stein 2009). Social movement organizations can then utilize websites as a space for providing alternative forms of information regarding both their social movement and the issues they are fighting for. Stein argues that the literature that exists on studying social movements fails to investigate how social movement organizations use the internet as a form of communication that counters media discourses.

Recently, several scholars have provided a more critical analysis of the role of ICTs in facilitating involvement in activist work. While social networking sites easily facilitate access to social movements by people globally, Van de Donk et al. (2004) argue that the internet cannot replace existing social movement actions. Instead, the internet will serve to compliment already existing techniques by social movements¹. Individual participation in collective action has become significantly easier with the use of the internet and can be as simple as pressing a button or signing an email petition (Polletta et al., 2013). However, online activism has been critiqued for its simplicity, in that online activism has been seen to undermine movement's goals as

¹ The use of the internet of course raises concerns about the security of social movement activists. Various governmental organizations can control access to the internet for political purposes. As well, they can use the internet to identify activists and as surveillance on both citizens and activists alike. I will not be addressing these issues in this thesis, but recognize that this is an important dimension of the relationship between social media, web use, social movements, and social change.

it requires little effort to join a group or sign an electronic petition (Van de Monk et al., 2004). This is commonly referred to as 'slacktivism', which implies lazy, half-hearted, and meaningless activism (Morosov, 2009; Van de Monk et al., 2004).

Castells (2004) argues that all major trends of change in our world are related and that it is possible to make sense of their interrelationship. In order to examine the ways in which people interact with change, technology must be taken seriously so that how technological change helps to fuel or dissuade revolutionary change can be located. Castells argues that the rise of the network society, as well as the growing power of identity, are intertwined processes that join to define globalization, geopolitics, and social transformation in the early 21st century (2004). Looking at the use of websites by social movement organizations then allows for an understanding of the ways in which organizations are or are not taking advantage of the potential benefits or drawbacks of the emergent network society.

The use of ICTs by social movement organizations is clearly emergent. A specific tactic used by organizations is to embrace the use of ICTs to further advance the goals of their social movement (Earl, 2013). New tactics for action, for example hacking, creating groups online, and attacking advertisers, have been facilitated by the internet, however the internet amplifies desires for taking action and serves as a strategic tool in facilitating such action (Polletta et al., 2013) as partaking in online activism is simpler and easier than offline activism. This is also, as noted above, a potential downfall of online activism. As well, examining the role of communication and technology for the purposes of collective action is significant in grasping how organizations network, build collective identity amongst their members, and how

they mobilize for action (Treré, 2011). Studying the websites of social movement organizations allows for analysis of content produced by sex worker rights organizations that is purposively provided to further their agenda. The information provided directly by social movement organizations to the public presents the information they consider relevant to disseminate.

Websites for social movement organizations typically present their information in a manner that limits the levels of interaction and dialogue that is available (Caren, Jowers, & Gaby, 2012; Stein, 2009), so the material presented on websites need to speak for themselves, without interaction. While social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter allow for an exchange of dialogue, websites are more static, in that interaction and dialogue are not the primary focus (van Stekelenburg & Boekkooi, 2013). Focusing on sex workers rights organizations in Canada, this thesis will examine the ways in which four specific organizations use their websites as a site of activist and advocacy work.

1.3.0 Sex Work in Canada

Sex workers in Canada confront complex working conditions, social stigma, and complicated, ambiguous legislation that influence the way in which they can live and work. The act of prostitution itself, exchanging sexual services for money, has never been illegal in Canada, however, prostitution has been heavily regulated and criminalized (Corriveau, 2013). The language used to discuss sex work and prostitution is political and purposive. The Canadian government, in the *Criminal Code of Canada*, positions the acts of selling sex negatively as prostitution, whereas

sex workers rights organizations label this as sex work, reflecting their view of sex work as labour.

In order to address the complexities associated with sexual labour, workers and allies have organized to fight for social, political, and economic change throughout Canada. The activist and advocacy work engaged in by sex workers rights organizations throughout Canada has been instrumental in reshaping the debate of prostitution as sex work, such as supporting sex workers in the Supreme Court of Canada challenge *Bedford v. Canada*, as well as assisting sex workers on an individual level.

1.4.0 History of Prostitution Regulation in Canada

Shaver (n.d.) categorizes the legislation and enforcement of prostitution regulation in Canada into five distinct time periods: pre-confederation (1759-1867), Victorian (1867-1920), post-Victorian(1920-1970), rise of sex worker advocacy (1970-1990), and the contemporary period (1990-present).

During the pre-confederation period from 1759 – 1867, prostitution was regulated through vagrancy laws, which aimed to remove undesirable elements of society from the streets such as prostitutes, the poor or homeless, and anyone found to be causing street disorder (Corriveau, 2013; Backhouse, 1985; Shaver, n.d.; Van der Meulen, Durisin, & Love, 2013). While they were liable for prosecution, enforcement of vagrancy laws was sparse and prostitution was often tolerated. Based heavily on the British moral and social movements, Canada implemented a Contagious Diseases Act (CDA) from 1865-1870, which meant that women could be

detained based on the suspicion that they may have a venereal disease, which could result in forcible confinement for up to three months (Van der Meulen et al., 2013). This legislation was enacted in order to protect military men from allegedly diseased prostitutes (Backhouse, 1985). During this period and the introduction of the Contagious Disease Act, the prostitute was considered to be a sexually deviant who spreads diseases (Doezema, 2000).

The year 1867 heralded in a new era of prostitution regulation in Canada, the Victorian period (Shaver n.d.). The federal government enacted legislation designed to protect some women and children deemed rescuable from exploitation by people such as pimps, and brothel owners. In 1892, upon the completion of the *Criminal Code of Canada*, prostitution related offenses were consolidated into vagrancy provisions that outlawed street walking prostitution, bawdy houses, as well as other offenses aimed at protecting “redeemable”, mostly Anglo-Saxon, women from exploitation by bawdy house owners, pimps, and men living off the avails of prostitution.

Rubin (1984) highlights how the laws in place to govern sexuality are rooted in the moral crusades of the 19th century. Laws used to arrest sex workers emerged from campaigns against ‘white slavery’, centred on Victorian concerns that young, naïve white women were at risk of being lured or deceived by non-Western, foreign men into prostitution (Backhouse, 1985; Doezeema, 2000). Anti-white slavery campaigns soon, however, “served as a marker of and metaphor for other fears, among them fear of women’s growing independence, the breakdown of the family, and loss of national identity through the influx of immigrants” (Doezeema, 2000, p.

40). Public concern over white slavery served to protect alleged innocent white women from prostitution, but also the nation from non-white prostitutes (Doezema, 2000) as those being prosecuted for prostitution at this time were largely racialized. For example, in 1860-1870's, 40% of the prostitutes in Halifax jails were Black. In 1885, 38% of female prostitutes were Irish born, representing the majority of female inmates in Upper Canada (Backhouse, 1985). Backhouse (1985) argues that "discrimination on the basis of race and ethnic origin was obviously an important factor in the enforcement of Canadian prostitution laws" (Backhouse, 1985, p.401)"

Canadian legislation came to reflect the morals of the Victorian bourgeoisie, where sexuality became restricted and confined. Following suit, the (heterosexual) family came to be the sole area of normal sexuality, where sex is solely for the purposes of reproduction (Foucault, 1990). The aim was to protect some women considered "fallen" from pervasive sexuality, and the moral reform movement maintained traction until between 1917 and 1920 (Parent, Bruckert, Corriveau, Mensah & Toupin, 2013). This era of prostitution regulation was marked by religious and moral notions of the prostitute as a "fallen woman" (Backhouse, 1985; Doezeema, 2000).

In Canada, during the post-Victorian era (1920-1970) the Victorian morals of social purity decreased in significance, with minimal changes to prostitution regulation during this 50-year period (Shaver, n.d.). Sexual practices outside marriage remained pervasive. While the law came to reflect Victorian morals and penalize sexuality visible outside the home, Foucault notes that this visible,

illegitimate sexuality was taken elsewhere, for profit, into brothels and mental institutions.

While the law remained stagnant in this period, sexuality became an area of dispute that represented the displaced social anxieties and emotional intensities of society. As sex and sin are associated, pervasive sexuality was condemned by major societal institutions such as the government, the church, and the family. Brock (2009) argues that following World War II, social and political changes emerged, specifically around the renegotiation of the sexual. During this period, issues of sexuality were constructed as social problems, and the Canadian government took an active role in maintaining control over social movements for sexual liberation (Brock, 2009). As Brock notes “ ... prostitution, as well increasing awareness of sexual violence and abuse ... came to comprise a contested terrain through which established sexual boundaries and moral codes were challenged, renegotiated, and shifted” (2009, p. 5). Western nations, she argues, no longer have a moral framework regarding sexuality that is universally agreeable, instead, sex has become a socially constructed space for the negotiation of power relations (Brock, 2009). Brock argues that it is within this context that prostitution has come to be defined and viewed as a social problem.

Following the calm of the post-Victorian period, a reemergence of public debate around prostitution, focusing on public concerns surrounding street-based prostitution emerged in the 1970's (Shaver, n.d.). In 1972 the status offense of vagrancy was found to be in violation of the Bill of Rights established in 1960 (Van der Meulen et al., 2013). At this point, being a prostitute was not considered an

offense anymore. Activities around prostitution, however, remained illegal and in 1972, the behaviour of solicitation became illegal under the *Criminal Law Amendment Act* (Corriveau, 2013). In 1983, the federal government commissioned a report on pornography and prostitution. This report, known as the Fraser Report, was released in 1985 and suggested criminal sanctions for street-based prostitution, but did recognize the need for social and legal reform, especially for legislation on bawdy houses (Corriveau, 2013; Robertson, 2003; Shaver, n.d.). For the most part, attempts for social and legal reform were ignored, sanctions were toughened, and in December 1985 section 213 of the *Criminal Code* was introduced, resulting in the illegality of: stopping or attempting to stop motor vehicles for the purpose of prostitution, impeding the flow of pedestrian or vehicular traffic, and stopping or attempting to stop any person / communicating or attempting to communicate with any person for the purpose of prostitution (Robertson, 2003). The dominant agenda in prostitution regulation reflects a moral bias in the law, punishing those who are most vulnerable as opposed to focusing on the social, political, and economic issues that create a situation where some people resort to sexual labour to survive (Brock, 2009) as was suggested in the Fraser report.

While sex worker organizations were fighting for the legal recognition of their occupation and improvement of the social conditions that may lead women into sex work, police departments, citizen based organizations, and city officials were fighting for funding and legal resources to combat the 'nuisance' of street based sex work (Brock, 2009). Brock argues that legal action against street-based sex work is intended to maintain control of the trade while attempting to render

invisible the people working in sex work. Taking legal action against sex workers helps to reinforce the position of the government that prostitution is abhorrent, demeaning, and violent and therefore the Canadian legislation is meant to uphold and enforce a societal moral code (Brock, 2009).

Rubin (1984) argues that since 1977, law enforcement has increased their prosecution of prostitution related laws and that governments have increased their regulation of commercial sex. Governments have passed restrictive ordinances, zoning laws, changed safety codes, increased sentences associated with prostitution, and relaxed the evidentiary requirements of law enforcement when carrying out a prostitution related charge (Rubin, 1984). Zoning and attempting to keep prostitution concentrated in specific areas of the city “institutionalizes the control of women by profiteers and police, and many women justifiably refuse to work in these areas” (Brock, 2009, p. 8). The legislation and enforcement changes essentially creates an increase in the way that the state is controlling the sexuality of adults, and Rubin (1984) suggests that this is going unnoticed. Backlash against the changes in prostitution laws in Ontario by government and anti-prostitution organizations exemplifies this. Additionally, the ‘not in my backyard’ mentality and the ways that citizens have internalized the mindset of governing institutions by focusing on the way in which they believe their communities have been victimized by the presence of sex work (Bruckert & Hannem, 2013) influence public opinion on changing legislation.

National government has been ineffective in preventing the proliferation of the neoliberal agenda since the 1970s or efficient in finding ways to shield their

citizens from the impacts of the decline in social services, the cuts to spending, and the decline of Keynesian / welfare state (Whitmore et al., 2011). This failure by national governments is evident in the ways in which they have done very little to address the need for social justice. Given the effects of the recent downturn in the global economy, and the continued strength of religious conservatism, the rise of both social conservatism and neoliberalism are strongly reflected in the current Canadian political discourse, permeating through social discourses (MacDonald et al., 2013) and reflected in proposed legislation for the governance of sex work.

With the dominant neoliberal message promoting the overcoming of social circumstance as a matter of individual effort and choice (Comack and Balfour, 2004; Martin, 2002), the onus is placed onto sex workers to control both the consequences of working sex work and circumstances that led them to the sex trade in the first place. The neoliberal agenda abstracts sex workers from the social circumstances that shape the decision of people to work in the sex trade (Bittle, 2013)². The individual sex worker has come to be seen as responsible for having entered the sex trade and the conditions under which this decision was made. Bittle (2013) argues that “neoliberalism compounds the feminization of poverty, drastically reducing social programs, and employment opportunities” for people involved in the sex trade (p. 285).

The neoliberal agenda must be recognized in understanding the responses that have emerged to combat neoliberal policies dominating the political sphere. As

² While Bittle (2013) is talking more specifically about youth sex workers, his argument about the neoliberal agenda and the positioning of sex workers extends beyond the boundaries of youth sex work.

an ideology that promotes the market as the central governing system for economic, political and social life, neoliberalism understands societies as governed by the market, opposed to the market being governed by societies (Whitmore et al., 2011). Both globally and in Canada, the spread of neoliberalism has led to the rise of social justice groups that aim to confront the consequences of a neoliberal agenda (Whitmore et al., 2011). The neoliberal era has resulted in the need for social justice movements to rethink their strategies to confront hegemonic power, as well as envisioning ways to combat and restructure policy to create a better life (Whitmore et al., 2011). Social activism is “currently situated in the dual realities of the continuing ascendancy of neoliberal policies on one hand and the growing importance of the role of citizen groups in opposing them on the other hand” (Whitmore et al., 2011, p 11).

In the contemporary period, which began in 1990, as Shaver (n.d.) notes, many initiatives emerged in support of sex workers in Canada. Canadian sex worker advocacy organizations continued to emerge in order to advocate for the rights and protection of sex workers nationally and globally (Brock, 2009; Robertson, 2003; Shaver, n.d.). Additionally, there were several court challenges to the legislation in the *Criminal Code*, such as the BC challenge, lead by the Downtown Eastside Sex Workers United Against Violence group, which alleged that the *Criminal Code of Canada* infringed on rights to the equality, liberty, security, and expression of sex workers (Shaver, n.d.).

Similarly, the recent challenge, *Bedford v. Canada*, argued that three sections of the *Criminal Code of Canada* prevents sex workers from working in a safe and

secure environment (Corriveau, 2013; Shaver, n.d.). Section 210 of the *Criminal Code* says that running a bawdy-house, more commonly known as a brothel, is illegal. This means that it is illegal for a sex worker to use the same space (hotel room, house, etc.) to work out of. The second challenge, section 212(1j), deals with living off the avails of prostitution. This means that third parties involved with sex workers cannot use any earnings made by a sex worker and this section is frequently described as the “pimping law”. The problem with section 212(1j) is that it prevents sex workers from employing someone to keep their books, hiring a driver or security guard, or contracting out any work from another professional. Finally, the challenge to Section 213 (1c) addresses the illegality of sex workers communicating about the exchange of sex for money in a public area, including motor vehicles, which creates risky, snap decisions by sex workers as they do not have the opportunity to negotiate with a client before moving to an intimate setting.

1.5.0 Conceptualizing Sex Work

According to Van der Meulen et al (2013) there are three frameworks for understanding sex work, with each framework corresponding with a specific policy option. Most conceptualizations, they argue, comprise of sex work as a form of sexual slavery, as a necessary evil, or as a form of labour, which in turn correspond with a prohibitionist, regulation or decriminalization perspective respectively (Van der Meulen et al., 2013).

A radical feminist perspective is most consistent with a policy of prohibition or criminalization of clients and third parties. This perspective views sex work as a

form of sexual slavery where female sex workers are victims in need of rescuing. Sex work is then gendered exploitation and slavery (see Jeffreys (2009), Coy (2009) and Farley (2004)). A radical feminist perspective focuses on prostitution as a way in which male dominance and the oppression of women is reinforced and perpetuated in society (Bromberg, 1997). Radical feminists see prostitution not as a necessary function of society, rather as a social construct and behaviour that maintains male dominance but is not necessary for women (Jeffrey, 2009).

Radical feminists argue that sex workers themselves should not be criminalized, but the purchasers and exploiters of sex workers should be (Van der Meulen et al., 2013). Justice Minister Peter McKay has recently proposed this policy option as Canada's new position on sex work. This model is described as an abolitionist approach that straddles the middle ground of prohibition and legalization in that the actual act of prostitution is not illegal, but necessary steps must be taken in order to prevent an infringement on the safety and order of the public (Barnett, Casavant & Nicol, 2011).

As well, a total criminalization of sex work additionally criminalizes sex workers themselves. From this perspective, sex workers are conceived as being "immoral", and should be punished through criminal legislation for choosing to engage in sex work (Bruckert & Hannem, 2013). As problems associated with sex work, such as the alleged nuisance of street-based work, can be regulated through other forms of legislation in municipalities, then the legislation specifically aimed at sex workers serves to differentiate sex workers and regular citizens, stigmatizing and criminalizing sexual labour (Bruckert & Hannem, 2013).

The next framework for conceptualizing sex work focuses on regulation or legalization by the state (Van der Meulen et al., 2013). From this perspective, sex work is seen as a necessary evil in society, and as a social problem (Brock, 2009; Van der Meulen et al., 2013) that needs to be regulated by the state in order to produce the lowest amount of undesirable effects. The government is responsible for regulating problems associated with sex work, such as transmission of STI's, protecting private properties, and traffic or noise problems (Brock, 2009).

This perspective of sex work involves an absence of criminal penalty for working as a sex worker or for purchasing sexual services (Marneffe, 2012). In this framework, prostitution related activity that is currently subject to criminal sanctions in the *Criminal Code of Canada* would be considered lawful activity, however would be regulated through specific legislation dealing with licensing, taxing, and regulation of sex work, similar to current massage parlor or strip club legislation (Brock, 2009; Barnett et al., 2011; van der Muelen & Durisin, 2008; Van der Meulen, 2013). While this perspective views prostitution as a legal occupation, it views sex work as deviant and sex workers as deviants in need of control.

The final framework discussed by Van der Meulen et al. (2013), and the perspective adopted by sex workers rights organizations is the perspective of sex work as work. The recognition of sex work as a form of legitimate labour represents a dramatic shift from the previously mentioned ideologies, in that it shifts the focus from sex work as sexual slavery or social necessity to an understanding of sexual labour within a larger capitalist context (Van der meulen et al., 2013). Embracing a sex work as labour perspective creates a space for discussion of exploitive

conditions that are not inherent to sex work, but are problematic in nature and arise out of systems of racism, classism, sexism, imperialism and so forth that shape sex work as an industry (Van der Meulen et al., 2013).

Often referred to as sex positive feminism, sex positive feminism argues for the decriminalization of sex work and sex workers (MacDonald et al., 2013). Sex positive feminism argues that radical feminists are “natural allies of a sexual conservatism that condemns the anonymous, recreational, pleasure-seeking sex in sex work” (LeMonchek, 1997, p 114 in MacDonald et al., 2013). In this perspective, consent is key. Consent should be recognized for others that chose to consent to non-normative sexual behaviour and do not agree with the abolition of sex work. Instead they see the need to improve the self determination of sex workers and the necessity to view sex work as a legitimate form of work, including safe and decent working conditions (Sutherland, 2004).

Sex positive feminism is concerned with disconnecting sexuality and sexual relations from patriarchy. Sex positive feminists believe it is only possible to do this by rejecting different efforts to censor, monitor, and stigmatize consensual sexual relations, including pornography and sex work (Green, 2013). The sex work as work paradigm is consistent with a push for decriminalization of sex work in Canada and globally. This perspective differs from legalization in that the prostitution related offences in the *Criminal Code* are eliminated and are not replaced with new legislation (Library of Parliament, 2004; POWER, 2012). This model is commonly referred to as the New Zealand model since in 2003 New Zealand adopted a stance of decriminalization where there is an absence of criminal penalty for both workers

and clients (Corriveau, 2013; van der Meulen & Durisin, 2008). Advocates pushing this model of prostitution policy believe that decriminalization would help to eliminate some of the conditions that currently pressures sex workers to engage in practices that compromise their safety, and allow sex workers to have more control over their work environment, such as the ability to run their own small businesses, and benefit from current labour legislation (Library of Parliament, 2004).

Sex workers rights movements use the term sex worker instead of prostitute and sex work instead of prostitution in order to give agency to workers in the sex trade industry as workers, and to remove or reduce the stigma associated with prostitution (Kontula, 2008; Shaver, n.d.; Van der Meulen et al., 2013). Sex work is an umbrella category that refers to activities related to exchanging money or compensation for sexual services that includes but is not limited to escorting, stripping, street-based sex work, pornography and massage parlor work (Van der Meulen et al., 2013). When discussing sex work as an industry, sex workers rights organizations use the term to refer to people who have agency and choice in the decision to work in the sex industry (Parent & Bruckert, 2013). Sex work is considered to be an option among other job opportunities and many sex workers freely chose to work in this industry. As Parent and Bruckert (2013) argue, like in any profession, sex workers are diverse, ranging in age, gender, race, ethnic origins, sexualities, abilities and ability to choose sex work (Doe, 2012; Parent & Bruckert, 2013).

1.6.0 Organizing for Social Change

Sex workers have challenged conceptions of sex work as sexual slavery and a necessary evil since the late 1970's, (Clamen, Gillies, & Salah, 2013; Shaver, n.d.), including challenging the social stigma attached to sex work and actively trying to have sex work recognized as legitimate labour. Previous attempts at organizing for social change paved the way for the case of *Bedford v. Canada*.

Aside from decriminalization, one of the major battles that sex workers have encountered is fighting for labour rights and the ability to unionize. In 2001, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) passed a resolution that expressed their support for the decriminalization of sex work (Clamen, Gillies, & Saleh, 2013), creating some support for unionizing sex workers. The goal was to have sex worker labour rights recognized for all sex workers. Due to the criminalization of acts surrounding sex work, such as managing a common bawdy house, unionization is very difficult, if not impossible (Clamen, Gillies, & Salah, 2013).

The rise of advocacy organizations is consistent with, as Shaver (n.d.) notes, the increase in public debate around street-based prostitution and is an important part of the contemporary period of prostitution regulation. In the 1980's, the first sex workers rights organization was formed in Vancouver, the Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes, and since then many organizations have sprung up across Canada in order to advocate on behalf of sex workers (Arthur et al., 2013). In 1983, the Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes emerged, followed by Maggie's Toronto Sex Worker Action Project in 1986 (Lewis, Shaver, & A-Tyndale, 2013) and other grassroots sex workers rights organizations such as PACE (1990s) in British Columbia, Stella (1995), in Quebec, and Stepping Stone (1987) in Nova Scotia,

among others. Sex workers came together with community activists to challenge the societal conceptions of sex work in Canada and challenge the legislation in place that jeopardizes their work and stigmatizes their lives (Lewis et al., 2013).

Many sex workers' rights organizations in Canada have common strategies in assisting sex workers. One particular strategy shared among organizations is the creation and maintenance of bad trick or date sheets that allow sex workers to report and consult lists of negative experiences and bad clients in order to prevent repetition of these problems (Arthur et al., 2013). Other strategies that were embraced by organizations in Canada include counseling services, drop-in centres and HIV/AIDs education and prevention (Arthur et al., 2013; Crago & Clemen, 2013; MacDonald et al., 2013). In addition to creating and disseminating resources, sex workers rights organizations advocate for the decriminalization of sex work in the media, to the public, and to allies (Arthur et al., 2013; Crago & Clemen, 2013; MacDonald et al., 2013)..

1.7.0 Sex Worker Use of Websites

Similar to other social movements sex workers in Canada have incorporated ICTs as part of their movement. In 2001, Nakedtruth.ca was created by an exotic dancer who aimed to provide a safe space for on the Internet for dancers to share information. This website was designed to challenge the misconceptions of exotic dancers, as a place to share information amongst dancers, and as a way of educating clients of dancers on how to behave when attending a strip club (Arthur et al., 2013). Spreading quickly across British Columbia, this website then rapidly spread

across Canada providing information to news organizations and media outlets. The creator of the website, Annie Temple, became a figurehead for the fight for the equal rights of exotic dancers in Canada. Nakedtruth.ca also combatted the stigma associated with being a sex worker, branching out to encompass more forms of sex work on the website while celebrating the accomplishments of sex workers in Canada, for example by organizing Canada's first adult entertainment awards in Vancouver in 2010 (Arthur et al., 2013). The use of websites among social movement organizations is mushrooming and sex worker rights organizations have also taken to using websites as a site for disseminating their messages.

1.8.0 Contributions

Prostitution is a topic of interest in sociology that has been covered from many different perspectives. Most traditional studies on prostitution focus on prostitution as a "deviant" behaviour, with the prostitute constructed as the deviant (Weitzer, 2009). Other sociological studies subscribe to various feminist paradigms, such as prostitution as oppressive, or sex work as an empowering form of employment that should be recognized as such (Weitzer, 2009). This research takes the position on prostitution as constructed in terms of sex work. I focus on the activist and advocacy work conducted by sex worker rights organizations, specifically how said organizations use their websites to support and further the agenda of the organizations.

With the use of websites serving as a major strategy used by organizations to advance their goals (Earl, 2013), I was fascinated to look at how specifically sex

workers rights organizations use their websites to push for social change. While social media platforms allow for the exchange of information from people both inside and outside organizations (van Stekelenburg & Boekkooi, 2013), websites serve as a static, flagship space for the dissemination of information (Caren et al., 2012) and therefore the material on the website has to speak for itself.

One of the main contributions in my research is analyzing how sex workers rights organizations engage in public education on their websites, with specific reference to explicating the current Canadian legislation, bolstering an agenda for the decriminalization of sex work in Canada, and pushing for equal rights and a shift in understanding of sex workers in general. In this research, I demonstrate how the organizations use their websites as a space for counter narrative, and in this way engage in public education about the ongoing political battle around sex work and prostitution legislation.

At the time of my analyses, January 2014 – April 2014, legislation regarding sex work in Canada was in flux. The Supreme Court of Canada had ruled that the prostitution provisions in the *Canadian Criminal Code* were unconstitutional. In response to this ruling, various interest groups were promoting their different agendas in hopes of influencing the direction of future legislation. The Conservative party has embraced the neoliberal agenda of a market-based economy and increased criminalization of sex workers. There is great tension between the Conservative government, sex worker rights organizations, and the public as to the introduction of new legislation.

It is of great importance to study organizations that are supporting sex workers rights and highlight how they are organizing for social and political change. To this, with the rise and accessibility of the Internet and online social media, studying the websites of sex worker right's organizations allows for a critical analysis of the ways in which four of these organizations are organizing online to push for the possibility of social change.

It is becoming more common, and arguably necessary, for successful movements to have a presence on the internet. With the success seen by sex worker rights movements in Canada with respect to striking down the *Criminal Code* provisions governing sex work, I explore how four Canadian sex worker rights organizations use their websites as a site of activist and advocacy work. In the pages to follow, I focus on how four Canadian sex workers rights organizations -- Maggie's, POWER, PACE, and Stella -- use their websites as a site of social and political change. I capture the critical period (January 2014 – April 2014) between the Supreme Court of Canada decision and the introduction of new legislation, Bill C-36, by the Conservative government. I contribute to an understanding of the trajectory of the treatment of sex work in Canada by capturing the use of websites by sex worker rights organizations to advocate for progressive legislation.

1.9.0 Chapter Outlines

This thesis begins with an overview of social movements, specifically the women's movements in Canada, the introduction of information communication technologies to such movements, and the importance of studying ICTs in activist and

advocacy work. As well, this chapter outlines an overview of prostitution regulation in Canada, followed by different ways in which sex work is conceptualized and ways sex workers have organized for change. Chapter 2 examines the analytical and methodological strategies used in conducting an analysis of four sex workers rights organization's websites. Chapter 3 presents my findings on the way in which sex work is conceptualized on the four websites. In Chapter 4, I outline my findings regarding the effective social movement web use, as well as what audiences are targeted by the websites. Chapter 5 highlights my findings of success-based activism, incorporating a framework of appreciative inquiry. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes this thesis by discussing key findings, addressing the overarching research question, and suggesting directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Research Design

2.0.0 Introduction

The purpose of my research is to examine how activism and advocacy work is done online at four sex worker's rights organizations. In this chapter, I will state my research questions, provide an overview of the four organizations, outline the strategies used to analyze their websites, and conclude with locating myself as the researcher.

2.1.0 Research Question

The overarching question I ask in this research is:

- 1) How do sex worker right's organizations use their websites as a site of activist and advocacy work?

In addressing this research question, I posed several research queries that ask

- (i) How do various organizations conceptualize sex work on their websites, and to what extent do they incorporate an intersectional feminist perspective?
- (ii) What communication strategies are used by the four organizations to target audiences in the viewing public?
- (iii) What audiences do the four websites target?
- (iv) How do the four organizations discuss successes and challenges on their websites?
- (v) In what ways do sex workers' rights organizations appear to use websites to further their goals?

2.2.0 Defining Activist and Advocacy Within Social Movements

For this thesis, I define activism as working to challenge the status quo to bring about social, political or economic change through methods of resistance, protest or conflict (see Harlow, 2011; Hodgson & Brooks, 2007; Whitmore et al., 2011). This includes, but is not limited to, methods of resistance such as protests, marches, riots, boycotts, hacktivism, demonstrations, internet campaigns, petitions, creating civil disobedience, etc.

I define advocacy as acting on behalf of or speaking for the organizations or people they represent to push forward the agenda of the organization to further social, economic, political, or ideological goals to create enduring change (see; Obar, 2014; Whitmore et al., 2011). This includes, but is not limited to, strategies such as conducting and publishing research, lobbying maintaining a media presence, lobbying, providing education, providing expert testimony, interacting with the general public, etc. (Obar, 2014). It is evident that activism and advocacy are not mutually exclusive.

2.3.0 Four Sex Worker Rights Organizations

According to Zhang & Wildemuth (2009), when sampling for the purposes of a qualitative analysis of content, the samples must be purposively selected and should inform the research questions that are being examined. I undertook an analysis of four sex worker rights organizations websites. In determining what websites to analyze, I used several criteria. First, I chose organizations that

supported a sex worker's rights agenda in order to further discussions on sex work and activism. Secondly, I chose organizations that are Canadian because Canada is currently undergoing major changes to the *Criminal Code of Canada*, with respect to the prostitution-related provisions. Third, I chose organizations based in Canada's largest cities, such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, as these organizations service a larger number of sex workers. I also included an organization based in the nation's capital, Ottawa. Fourth, I chose organizations that had been involved in some way with the legal challenges to Canada's prostitution laws. Finally all four organizations chosen have websites with an online presence. These websites were examined during the period of January 2014 – April 2014.

In determining what content I would analyze in my research, I chose to focus on the websites of the organizations, not including their social media platforms. Specifically, I was interested in looking at the content produced by the organizations that they present to different audiences, but I was not necessarily concerned with the responses of people external to the organization or the way in which they engage with the information.

Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are limited in what they present regarding information about the organizations specifically, especially the extensive information that I detail throughout my research. For example, Twitter is limited to a maximum of 140 characters per post and does not allow for a significant biography or explanations of the organizations on the Twitter page. In fact, the biographies on the Twitter pages of these organizations all link to the organizations websites. As well, the Facebook pages of the organization limit the

information posted specifically by the organization and allows for any Facebook user to post. While this creates content, it does not address the queries I posed in my thesis, looking at conceptualizations of sex work, strategies at targeting different audiences, and discussions of successes, challenges, and goals.

Facebook and Twitter, as well as other social media platforms, are definitely a form of online activism and the organizations do employ these strategies by having created these pages. However, my interests in this research focus more specifically on the website platforms themselves. While I comment on whether the organizations make lateral linkages (Stein, 2009) to their various social media platforms and reflect on how they could further augment their social media presence on their websites, I purposively chose to focus the flagship websites.

The four sex worker organizations studied in this thesis are: Maggie's Toronto Sex Worker Action Project (Maggie's), Providing Alternative Counselling and Education Services (PACE) in Vancouver, Prostitutes of Ottawa/Gatineau Work, Educate, and Resist (POWER), and Stella in Montreal.

2.3.1 Stella

Stella is a sex worker led organization based out of Montreal, Quebec. They believe in providing support and information to sex workers, promote decriminalization of sex work, fight to end discrimination against sex workers, and to educate the public about sex work (Stella, n.d). Stella's created a series of fact sheets on sex work, the charter, and the Bedford case that are instrumental in understand the status of sex work in Canada prior to the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in late 2013.

2.3.2 POWER: Prostitutes of Ottawa/Gatineau Work, Educate and Resist

POWER is a non-profit organization that was formed in 2008 out of the Ottawa/Gatineau area of Ontario and Quebec. They recognize sex work as a profession and support a society where sex workers will not be discriminated against, targeted, or victimized based on their profession. They argue sex work is valuable, legitimate, and fulfilling work and argue sex work makes critical contributions to society (POWER, n.d.).

2.3.3 Maggie's Toronto Sex Worker Action Project

Maggie's is an organization run by and created for local sex workers in the Toronto area (Maggie's, n.d.). They believe that all sex workers, regardless of race, gender, class, or type of sex work, should be able to live and work with safety and dignity, and the organization aims to facilitate this mission. Maggie's takes an interactive perspective on the participation of sex workers in the creation of safer working conditions and believes that in order to improve the working conditions or opportunities of sex workers, workers themselves must be actively involved in taking control of their lives and their destinies (Maggie's, n.d.).

2.3.4 PACE: Providing Alternatives Counselling & Education Services

Pace is an organization that is driven by sex workers out of Vancouver, British Columbia. On their website, they advertise four different avenues of services and support for sex workers: Support services, Beautiful Experiential Life Links to Empowerment Program (BELLE), Violence Prevention, and Public Education. Much like Maggie's, PACE takes a nothing about us, without us philosophy, whereby PACE advocates being "By, with, and for sex workers". They take a perspective that

education and support will help to reduce harm and isolation, advocating for the safety of sex workers. They also advocate for equality under Canadian law for sex workers (PACE, n.d.).

The following chart captures the background characteristics of the organizations, as presented on their websites.

Background Characteristics of the Four Websites				
Organization	Stella	POWER	Maggie's	PACE
Location	Montreal	Ottawa/ Gatineau	Toronto	Vancouver
Year founded	1995	2008	Late 1980s (year unlisted, but describes "over 25 years of history")	Early 1990s
Membership	"All genders, all areas of sex work"	"all genders who self-identify as former or current sex workers, regardless of the industry sector in which they work(ed)"	Sex workers	Sex workers "Vancouver's most marginalized populations; people who often fall through the cracks"
Registered Charity	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Involved in Bedford case?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Board of Directors listed?	Yes	No	No	Yes

2.4.0 Strategies of Analysis

Three different perspectives inform my analysis. First, intersectional feminist theory stresses the understanding that gender is not an independent source of oppression, instead it is necessary to look at the ways in which other categorizations of identity intersect to influence gendered experience. This theory influenced my analysis of how the organizations conceptualize sex work on their websites. I used Stein's categorizations of effective social movement web use to look at

characteristics of the websites and how they target different audiences. Finally, I used appreciative inquiry to highlight how social movement organizations recognize successful advocacy and activist work, and the importance of this to future success.

2.4.1 Intersectional Feminist Theory

When studying the ways in which people relate to the social world, intersectional feminist theory recognizes that people are not homogenous groups and that there exists great diversity in experience and in identities. This feminist addresses the multiplicity of marginalization that women experience based on different forms of social location and complications present in gendered experiences.

Coined in the late 1980's by Kimberlé Crenshaw (Crenshaw, 1991), intersectionality rose out of needs of black women, who were being excluded from both the white feminist movement representing a white, middle class agenda, and the anti-racist movement that was encompassed by male bias (Carbin & Edenheim, 2013; Shields, 2008). Intersectionality emerged as a metaphor for the ways in which different sectors of power structures intersected with structuralist ontology (Carbin & Edenheim, 2013) and later developed into feminist theory that addresses multiple nodes of marginalization and oppression (Davis, 2008). Intersectional feminist theory recognizes the intersections between gender and power differentials, which are centered on issues of age, class, nationality, ethnicity, racialization, sexuality, and dis/ability (Lykke, 2010). As described in *Politics and Gender* (2007, p. 229), "viewing gender as a stand-alone factor necessarily distorts reality. Gender never operates independently from other aspects of political life ... [therefore] the

integrated, mutually constitutive nature of identities is the central premise of intersectionality". In sum, as Huijg (2012) discusses "intersectional theory facilitates the problematisation of all positions – experiences and manifestations – on axes of social signification and, as such, positions in power relations" (p. 13).

Engaged as both theoretical and methodological tools, intersectional feminist theory can be considered as a way of analyzing the ways in which, throughout history, different sites of power and constraining societal norms have constructed sociocultural categories of marginalization, such as race, class, gender, age, sexuality, and ability (Lykke, 2010). These categories of different identities interact to create and foster different forms of social inequality. As a recent cornerstone of feminist theory, intersectionality represents the "mutually constitutive relations among social identities" (Shields, 2008, p. 301), which has arguably become one of the most significant contributions to the way that gender is understood (McCall, 2005; Shields, 2008). Intersectional feminist theory is of value as it reflects the reality and complexity of lived experiences. The category of woman (singular) is not an all-encompassing homogenous classification. Instead, there is a necessary shift in understanding to that of women (plural) as a heterogeneous, non-unified, multifaceted category, recognizing the different axes of social stratification (Huijg, 2012). Intersectionality is then an "analytical response to the myth of racially neutral gendered sameness" (Huijg, 2012, p. 6), as well as heteronormativity, and homogeneity in class and dis/ability (Lykke, 2010).

Studying activism and advocacy work from an intersectional feminist theoretical perspective is crucial as this perspective provides a platform to assess

whether organizations have located their analysis in terms of positions of power and privilege (Davis, 2008; Huijg, 2012). Intersectional feminist is useful for analyzing political resistance, in combination with power-laden social structures and relations (Lykke, 2010) and whether organizations recognize the ways in which different forms of categorization are intra-related and the ways in which they are interlaced with each other. In so doing, these categorizations must be examined as mutually related to each other, not as solitary, isolated categories (Lykke, 2010).

Employing an intersectional feminist theory in my analysis of Maggie's, POWER, PACE, and Stella allows me to address the extent to which the organizations embrace an intersectional perspective on their websites and will illuminate how the various organizations conceptualize sex. The following chart presents the queries relevant to the research questions.

Chapter 3: Conceptualizing Sex Work	
<i>Queries</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
How do they conceptualize sex work?	— Types of sex work: Survival sex work, street based sex work, indoor sex work, escort work, cam work, phone sex operator, etc.
Do they recognize the range in diversity of identities?	— Sex workers are not a homogenous group — Differences in age, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnic origins, ability, etc.
Is there recognition of multiple marginalizations?	— Differences in social location — Impact of class, range in socio economic statuses
Do they discuss conditions that push people to enter the sex trade	— Choosing to work in the sex industry as a profession — Survival sex work — Sex trafficking
What policy options for sex work are discussed?	— Decriminalization — Criminalization — Legalization

2.4.2 Social Movement Web Use

In her work on social movement web use, Stein (2009) looks at ways in which scholars can survey samples of social movement organizations websites,

focusing on the degree to which they portray certain features or characteristics.

Stein describes social movements as “social networks that engage in sustained collective actions, have a common purpose and challenge the interests and beliefs of those with power” (Stein, 2009, p 750). The study that Stein conducted aimed to understand to what extent social movements use websites as a communication resource

I have used Stein’s (2009) six-category typology to study social movement web use of the four sex worker’s rights organizations. The chart below shows the six categories she has identified as well as characteristics to look for under each category.

Chapter 4: Social Movement Web Use; Adapted from Stein (2009)	
<i>Categories</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
Provides information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Information regarding identity, views, and issues — News articles (alternative or mainstream) — Newsletters — Media critiques — Organization history / descriptions
Assists in action and mobilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Coordinate action and initiatives — Galvanize action — Online petitions, email campaigns — Coordination of online action — Coordination of local or national action (offline) — Projects or campaigns
Promotes interaction and dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Participatory forums / internal dialogue — Shared processes of meaning making — Chat rooms, bulletin boards, message boards — Online meetings — Member profiles — Discussion of strategy online — Support services — Contact information
Makes lateral linkages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Link to other organizations — Hyperlinks to news (mainstream and alternative), research — Connect with other social movements

Serves as a site of creative expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Imagination and aesthetics — Images, art, videos, music, poetry — Satire, irony, cartoon, pornography
Promotes fundraising and resource generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Donate sections — Monetary donations — Tangible donations — Creating databases of members or volunteers — Selling of merchandise — Job listings

Studying the websites of social movement organization allows for analysis of content produced by sex worker rights organizations that is purposively provided to further their agenda. The information being provided directly by social movement organizations to the public provides the information they consider relevant to disseminate (Stein, 2009). Websites for social movement organizations present their information in a manner that limits the levels of interaction and dialogue that is available (Caren, Jowers, & Gaby, 2012; Stein, 2009), so the material presented on websites need to speak for themselves, without interaction. While social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter allow for an exchange of dialogue, websites are more static, in that interaction and dialogue are not the primary focus (van Stekelenburg & Boekkooi, 2013).

2.4.3 Appreciative Inquiry

Whitmore, Wilson and Calhoun (2011) discuss the importance of researching successful activism and advocacy work in advancing further activism by organizations using a framework of appreciative inquiry. Their application of appreciative inquiry uses narrative to elicit success by drawing on success stories, identifying what elements for success were present in these stories, and then recognizing that these elements of success can be used to foster further success.

Shifting from problem-based thinking to successful experiences, appreciative inquiry focuses on positive events and then plans for future action based on prior success (Whitmore et al., 2011). Shifting to success-based thinking, the purpose of appreciative inquiry is to focus on processes that identify positive experiences and expands on these successes for the planning of future action (Whitmore et al., 2011). Whitmore et al. conducted semi-structured interviews with participants where they probed dialogue using an interview guide that focused on creating and eliciting success-based narrative from their participants. For example, they interviewed activists in organizations ranging from Oxfam Canada to Calgary's Raging Grannies.

I use a modified version of appreciative inquiry to provide the conceptual framework for addressing the challenges, successes, and visions of the sex worker's rights organizations. I have adapted the interview guide used by Whitmore et al. (2011) to focus on activism and advocacy work as portrayed on sex worker websites. Using this approach, I identify successes, goals, challenges, and visions of the future as identified by the organizations. I also apply the call of appreciative inquiry for reflection by critically examining the use of their websites.

Whitmore et al. (2011) acknowledge that appreciative inquiry has great flexibility in its approach, which allows for the authors to adapt the process for their research while still adhering to the main principles. In turn, I have adapted the work of Whitmore et al. and shifted the unit of analysis from interviewing participants to analyzing the websites published by sex worker's rights organizations. In this way, I apply their success-based approach to my analysis of the material published by the

organizations. The chart below contains the adapted version of Whitmore et al's., (2011) framework that I have employed in analyzing the content of these websites.

Chapter 5: Appreciative Inquiry	
<i>Overarching Questions</i>	<i>Secondary Questions</i>
Adapted Appreciative Inquiry Questions (Whitmore et al., 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Did the group use the website to tell a story about a successful project/campaign/social action? What stories did they tell? — What forms of success are highlighted on the webpages? — Does the group discuss conditions that were in place to help make [that project] successful? — Does the group use the website to talk about a time when that group/organization successfully overcame an obstacle or challenge? — Does the group use the website to identify visions of the future?
What goals do the organizations specify and how explicit are organizations about these goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Do they specify or list goals associated with the organization? — Where is this information located on the website? — Does the organization use the website to fundraise? Do they specify how the funds will be applied?
Are the goals described on the websites linked to the needs of sex workers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Are the goals listed congruent with the conceptualizations of sex work on the website? — Do they discuss improvements required to address sex worker needs?

2.5.0 Approaching the Websites

Prior to conducting my research, I familiarized myself with the culture of the organizations I planned to examine (Guba & Lincoln, 1986; Shenton 2004). By doing a cursory examination of the documents on their webpages and familiarizing myself with the culture prior to analysis, I was prepared to then reexamine and analyze the documents and webpages presented by the organizations. I also familiarized myself with previous research findings in the area of sex work and the legal status of prostitution in Canada, as well as literature on organized groups of sex workers, social movements, activism/advocacy organizations, and ways in which to study

webpages, all of which Shenton (2004) suggests are crucial to assess the manner in which my findings are congruent with previous research findings of other researchers.

As well, I undertook to use of thick description to provide details on the websites. I have included extensive quotes from the websites I analyzed, in order to support and illustrate the claims I make. By providing many quotes and detailed information from the websites, my conclusions may be compared to similar research settings. I further facilitated comparisons by providing information on what websites were a part of my research, the data collection methods I employed, and the time period in which my analysis took place.

2.6.0. Social Location of the Researcher

As a graduate student, I am interested in the ways that different bodies are policed in Western society as well as activist/advocacy efforts that emerge to combat these forms of policing. I am also very interested in the current legal case, *Bedford v. Canada*, as the outcome of this case is going to be monumental to the sex workers rights movement, regardless of the outcome. Additionally, a person who is close to me briefly worked in the sex industry, for approximately a year, and the way in which this work was stigmatized and problematized became an area of interest that I went on to further explore in my university career.

As an academic, I identify as a sex positive feminist. Sex positive feminism, sometimes referred to as sex radical feminism (Green, 2013; Rubin, 1984) or pro sex feminism (Bernstein, 1999) focuses on the repression of women's sexuality as a

linchpin of patriarchy. Sex positive feminism is concerned with disconnecting sexuality and sexual relations from patriarchy and believe it is only possible to do this by rejecting different efforts to censor, monitor, and stigmatize consensual sexual relations, including pornography and sex work (Green, 2013). It is a field of feminism that speaks for those who were denied their own voice in speaking about issues of themselves and their community, with respect to sexuality (Queen & Comella, 2008). The sex positive position is one that embraces a variety of feminists, queer theorists, and sex workers, amongst others (Sutherland, 2004). Sex positive feminists do not agree with the abolition of sex work, instead they see the need to improve the self determination of sex workers and the necessity to view sex work as a legitimate form of work, including safe and decent working conditions (Sutherland, 2004).

In embracing a sex positive perspective on sex work, I see sex work as an acceptable form of labour should someone chose to work in the sex trade industry. I believe that sex workers should be able to work with the safety, dignity and respect afforded to workers in other professions. While I identify as a sex-positive feminist, I appreciate that not all sex workers work in the industry under the same conditions and that many people in the sex trade industry do not choose to be there. The discussion of sex work in this thesis focuses on sex workers' rights organizations that argue for the validity of sex work as a chosen profession.

CHAPTER 3: Conceptualizing Sex Work Online

3.0.0 Introduction

Competing interest groups conceptualize sex work in ways to support their vested interests and through their definitions promote legislative alternatives. For example, the *Criminal Code of Canada* uses the language of prostitution and prostitute when discussing the act and actors involved with selling sex (Van der Meulen et al., 2013), while anti-prostitution organizations frame the discussion of sex work around trafficking, slavery, and female oppression (Sex Trade 101, n.d.). Pro sex work organizations frame the act of exchanging sexual services for money as a form of labour. From this perspective, sex work is an umbrella term that encompasses activities related to the exchange of compensation for sex, and is inclusive of but not limited to escorting, stripping, street-based sex work, survival sex work, pornography, and body rub parlors (Parent & Bruckert, 2013; Van der Meulen et al., 2013).

This chapter explores the questions: How do various organizations conceptualize sex work on their websites? And to what extent do they incorporate an intersectional feminist perspective? In addressing these questions, I outline the ways in which the four organizations conceptualize sex work on their websites by looking at each organization individually. Following this analysis, I compare the thematic issues of the four websites.

I found that the explanations of sex work on these sites includes the language used in discussing sex work, like POWER and Stella; challenging stereotypical

assumptions about sex work, like Maggie's; and examining the impacts on survival sex work, like PACE. In analyzing the conceptualizations of sex work and the intersectional nature of the websites, I found that six common themes emerge: stereotypical assumptions of sex work are questioned; sex work is portrayed as a response to systemic and economic problems in Canada; problematic categorizations of sex work are identified; intersectionality and diversity in sex work is recognized and reinforced; sex work is contrasted with sex trafficking; and all four organizations advocate for decriminalization of sex work.

3.1.0 Sex workers rights Organization's Conceptualizations

3.1.1 Stella

Stella's website is incredibly comprehensive in the material provided regarding sex work, sex workers, and the current legal status of sex work in Canada. Stella's posted a series of PDF Infosheets on the websites about sex work and sex workers.

In the document *Language Matters: Talking About Sex Work*, Stella outlines nine different ways in which sex work is conceptualized, both by sex workers and those outside the sex work community. The way in which sex work is discussed is not neutral and each term is loaded with meaning. Stella argues that these terms "communicate meaning and influences how people understand our [sex] work and create policy about [sex workers]" (Stella, 2013). The language they identify speaks to the "differences in [sex workers] histories, regional specificities and how [sex workers] self identify" (Stella, 2013).

Stella argues that “sex workers are often framed in very simplistic and stereotypical ways that erase the complexity of [their] realities” (Stella, 2013). The following nine concepts can be grouped thematically to present Stella’s position. I found that the concepts of adult sex work, youth sex work, and commercial sexual exploitation, women and girls, prostituted women, and victim, are all categories that fall under the theme of sex work as exploitive. Next, racialized sex workers, including indigenous sex workers, and vulnerable or marginalized sex workers are discussed more broadly as marginalizing concepts. Finally, consensual or forced sex work, prostitute, sex worker, and sex professionals, and survival sex work / sex workers would be represented under the theme of sex work as legitimate labour.

Stella suggests that the nature of differentiating adult sex work from youth sex work, and referring to all youth sex work as exploitive, fails to recognize that regardless of a person’s age, people have limited options to earn income and that youth, like adults, face circumstances of poverty, homelessness, and other situations that contribute to their limited options. Stella argues that youth sex work and child sexual abuse are not the same thing, and that criminalization is not an appropriate response to youth working in the sex trade. In this document, Stella does not indicate their position on the criminalization of clients or third parties involved with youth in the sex trade. Stella clearly acknowledges the intersectional experience of youth working in the sex trade. Additionally, Stella argues that conflating the categories of women with girls is a ploy to trigger infantilizing understandings of women working in the sex trade and marginalizes the experiences of girls working in the sex trade, merging their experiences into one that is shared with women.

Stella takes the position that the terms prostituted women and victims both remove agency from people working in the sex trade industry. Not only is prostituted women a gendered term, denying the existence of perhaps prostituted men, but the term “prostituted” itself implies that sex work is something that is done to sex workers and not by sex workers. For example, Stella states “many sex workers consider this framing and language around prostitution or sex work as disrespectful, alienating, and invisibilizing of our realities” (2013). This removes agency and suggests helplessness. Sex work itself does not make people victims, however sex workers, like other members of society, can be victimized (Stella, 2013). Stella advocates for a complex understanding of the conditions leading women to sex work, rather suggesting that all sex workers are exploited and victimized by sex work itself.

The second overarching theme is sex work as marginalizing, and includes racialized sex workers and vulnerable or marginalized sex workers. By the very nature of sexual labour and the multiplicity of views regarding sex work as, for example, victimizing or immoral and sex workers then as being victims in need of saving or women who need to be punished (Bruckert & Hannem, 2013), being a sex worker is inherently stigmatizing. When this stigma interacts with other forms of oppression, such as racialization, sex workers are impacted in multiple ways. Racialized and indigenous sex workers experience forms of oppression and discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity, in addition to the marginalization experienced for working in sex work. Stella addresses this concept of racialized sex work in this document. Stella argues that it is crucial to comprehend that different

workers have different experiences, and that intersecting realities influences these experiences. Racism, discrimination, colonization, and targeted over-policing disproportionately affect indigenous and racialized sex workers. Stella argues that “the phrase racialized sex workers, including indigenous sex workers is used to promote solidarity while still recognizing differences” while acknowledging both the experiences of racialized and indigenous workers, without minimizing the experiences of either communities (Stella, 2013).

When the term vulnerable is used to describe sex workers, it typically describes a specific type of sex workers, not sex workers as a whole (Stella, 2013). This concept is problematic as it fails to address how all sex workers are vulnerable, but their vulnerability stems from “outdated prostitution laws and current socio-economic conditions” (Stella, 2013). Marginalization may be a more suitable word for workers who are impacted by social location and lack of recognition of their human rights, as vulnerability is “situational and related to the systemic issues that many [sex workers] face” (Stella, 2013).

Stella’s site also maintains that sex work is legitimate work. I have identified three concepts from the Infosheet *Language Matters* that fall under this final theme of sex work as legitimate labour: consensual or forced sex work, survival sex work / sex workers, and prostitute, sex worker, and sex professional.

Consensual sex work, while being a term used to quell public fear over trafficking and forced labour, is legitimate work. This work is in direct contrast to so-called forced sex work. Non-consensual sexual activity is not sex work at all (Stella, 2013). For example, according to Stella (2013) “where people do not consent

to providing sexual services for money, this is abuse or assault, not work". While issues of choice and consent are not clear cut, as evidenced for example by the previous discussion of socio-economic conditions, Stella's perspective is that forced sex work is not sex work, and therefore the category of consensual sex work is not needed. Additionally, the phrase consensual sex work "obscures the difference between good and bad working conditions; while sex workers can consent to work [they] can still experience unsafe labour situations" (Stella, 2013).

This distinction is significant in examining how Stella as an organization positions sex work against human trafficking. While not directly talking about sex trafficking or human trafficking, Stella astutely addresses the distinction between sex work done consensually and forced sex work. Forced sex work is not actually sex work, it is abuse or assault (Stella, 2013). Stella argues that decriminalization of sex work is key to the success of anti-trafficking initiatives, as it would prevent traffickers from operating with impunity. As well, they note that in New Zealand, where sex work is decriminalized, there has been no increase in sex trafficking, consistent with other research in this area (see Corriveau, 2013; van der Meulen & Durisin, 2008)

The concept of "survival sex work" can be problematic, Stella argues, because it divides sex workers into categories and delegitimizes the agency of those labeled survival sex workers, implying that they are not strong enough or capable enough to make better decisions for their lives. While this is true that "survival sex work [refers to] sex workers who – due to numerous systemic factors or personal circumstances of poverty, homelessness, drug use and mental health – have

extremely restricted options and as a result work in dangerous circumstances”, other sex workers such as indoor sex workers and escorts, consider themselves to be survival sex workers as sex work is their solution to surviving within the systemic constraints that they are faced with (Stella, 2013).

The terms sex work and sex worker, Stella argues, have been deliberately used to unite the vast array of people working in the sex industry, regardless of gender, race, ability or type of sex work and to recognize that sex work is labour. For example, Stella (2013) states “sex work is liberation from the deep-rooted negative and legalistic term prostitute”. Some sex workers still use the term prostitute, but when used by people outside the sex trade industry it holds different meaning. The meaning of the term, Stella argues, depends on the audience. As well, in addressing the term sex professional, they suggest that while it legitimizes the labour of sex workers, the term is problematic in that it suggests accreditation or classist notions of what it means to be a professional.

The infosheet *Language Matters* (Stella, 2013) also offers a very rich explanation of the importance of different conceptualizations of sex work. The overarching argument is that sex work is a legitimate form of labour in response to difficult economic, social and political realities. Recognizing the differences among sex workers, acknowledging sex work as legitimate labour, and combatting the precarious situations that provide marginalization to people working in the sex trade are all necessary steps in the decriminalization of sex as work.

Stella supports a decriminalization model of sex work in Canada and as an organization actively advocates for this model on their website. They have a page on

their website, Legalization versus Decriminalization, and highlight how decriminalization is the only solution to the legislative problems in Canada. Decriminalization, they argue, would mean that sex workers would be recognized in the same way that other self-employed workers are, resulting in the same protections under labour legislation afforded to other Canadians. As sex work would be recognized as equal to other forms of labour, and be protected as such, the stigma surrounding sex work and sex workers would then decrease.

In their infosheet series, Stella has an infosheet entitled: The Basics: Decriminalization of Sex Work 101 (Stella, 2013), they discuss how decriminalization is “part of [the] larger struggle for the recognition and actualization of sex workers’ rights – including the right to autonomy, equality, self determination and dignity” (Stella, 2013). Decriminalization of sex work has larger health benefits for the Canadian population and is an integral step in reducing the transmission of HIV/AIDs and other sexual health issues as workers would have the ability to negotiate their working conditions with both employers and clients. Stella uses its website to argue that decriminalization is a part of a movement that would recognize sex workers autonomy, self determination, and the necessity of safer working conditions. This model of regulation will contribute to a larger global movement for the complete decriminalization of sex work worldwide.

3.1.2 POWER: Prostitutes of Ottawa/Gatineau Work, Educate and Resist

POWER is a non-profit sex worker rights organization that was created in 2008 in order to address the needs of sex workers in the Ottawa/Gatineau area. The POWER website is set up in a way that it presents many documents for the viewer to

read, as opposed to having a lot of text on their actual webpage. POWER provides access to press releases, documents written by the organization, and other resources for sex workers.

Their “About POWER” section is one of the few with information written on the actual page. Here they describe the organization and their beliefs that sex work is “honourable, valuable work worthy of celebration” (POWER, n.d.) and that workers in this industry should be afforded the same rights and protections as workers in any industry in Canada. They state that by criminalizing sex work, there is a perpetuation of violence and stigma against people working in this industry. Arguably, sex workers are the experts in the sex industry and should be actively involved in the decisions of future policy regarding prostitution legislation in Canada. They clarify that being a member at POWER is open to both current and former sex workers of any gender or type of work, as well as allies of sex workers who support the visions of POWER.

On their page “POWER docs”, many documents written by the organization, in conjunction with several researchers, are accessible. In order to understand how this organization conceptualizes sex work, I analyzed what they have written in these documents with specific reference to sex work and sex workers. The first document, *The Toolbox: What Works for Sex Workers*, is a compilation of information put together by POWER specifically aimed at people who provide services to sex workers. They describe sex work as complex, intersectional, and varied. Overall, POWER recognizes that sex workers come from all different walks of life, face

different and layered systems of oppression or privilege, and there does not exist a unified definition of what it is to be a sex worker.

There are eight concepts of sex worker relationships specifically mentioned in the discussion of diversity in the sex industry: sex work and people of colour, sex work and Indigenous peoples, sex work and sexual orientation, men and sex work, trans sex workers, sex work and youth, migrant sex workers, and people who use drugs. This document focuses on the relationships between diversity and sex workers and how that should be accounted for by service providers.

Sex workers of colour, Indigenous sex workers, and migrant sex workers face many systemic barriers and layers of oppression. POWER argues that sex workers of colour and Indigenous sex workers are at a much higher rate of criminalization in Canadian society and more frequently face arrest, harassment from law enforcement, higher rates of incarceration, and racial profiling from all levels of the criminal justice system. As well, the Indigenous people of Canada are disproportionately living in poverty in comparison to other Canadian populations. This may have impacted their decision to work in the sex trade (POWER, 2012). POWER also discusses the marginalization faced by migrant sex workers, who face a fear of deportation if criminalized, as their legal status in Canada is precarious. This threat creates very real barriers to accessing healthcare, shelter, or other critical resources offered to sex workers.

POWER addresses how sexual orientation and/or gender identity create diversity in the sex trade industry. People in LGB communities face many forms of marginalization historically, including discrimination violence, homophobia, and

heterosexism, amongst other things. Sex work can sometimes be the most lucrative way for people experiencing discrimination based on sexual orientation to support themselves. Specifically, POWER references LGB youth who may be forced out of their homes and families based on sexual orientation.

Gender identity compounds marginalization of sex workers. POWER specifically addresses transgender (trans) sex workers and male sex workers. Sex work is a viable option to combat discrimination, transphobia, violence, and stigma faced by trans people that leaves them more often “unemployed, homeless, precariously housed in unsafe or unaffordable housing, socially isolated, and [facing] barriers to health care, legal supports, education and social services” (POWER, 2012, p. 38). Sex work then becomes a solution to systemic barriers to employment and a way to survive.

Male sex workers are also varied in their orientation, ability, socio-economic status, and racial or cultural backgrounds. POWER suggests that male workers may find themselves invisible in discussions of sex work or in accessing services for sex workers, experience marginalization, internalized or institutionalized homophobia (although not all male sex workers are homosexual), and exclusion from both the queer community or the sex worker rights movements.

The final two concepts discussed by POWER under diversity in the sex trade are sex work and youth, and people who use drugs. Youth engaging in sex work may not consider themselves to be sex workers, instead they see themselves as making money in order to survive. POWER notes it is important to understand that not all youth who engage in sex work have been exploited or abused by others. Sex work

may be the best option for obtaining money in comparison to other job opportunities that are less than ideal. POWER suggests “in Toronto, the majority of youth who trade sex for the necessities of life are LGBTQ2 male or currently identifying as male, trans youth of colour and female” (POWER, 2012, p. 42). The criminalization and stigmatization of youth sex workers is problematic because it creates barriers to accessing potentially critical services, and it perpetuates a ‘youth as victims’ discourse that presents youth as lacking agency or ability to make decisions in their best interest.

Finally, POWER (2012) addresses that sex workers are stereotypically presented as habitual drug users or addicts, however much like workers in other professions, some sex workers have relationships with drugs or alcohol, which may vary from recreational use to addiction, while others do not. Some sex workers use substances to help them get through their work. Some use substances recreationally but separate substance use from their profession as a sex worker. And some sex workers do not use any substances. It is problematic that substance abuse or addiction becomes an additional form of marginalization for sex workers, as they then face increased discrimination and harassment from criminal justice officials.

In 2012, POWER released a document on their website entitled *10 Reasons to Fight for the Decriminalization of Sex Work* (Mensah & Bruckert, 2012). By highlighting the problems with criminalization, POWER accentuates why decriminalization is a necessary step. POWER argues that criminalization fuels violence against sex workers and workers are forced to make quick decisions that put their safety at risk. Criminalization creates an adversarial relationship between

workers and police, making it difficult for workers to report instances of violence on the job, as well as off the job for fear of being outed as a sex worker. Having to make snap decisions and limit communication with clients before working with them puts sex workers at risk for problems associated with physical and sexual health. As well, the stigma attached to being a sex worker makes accessing health services difficult. Criminalization of sex workers prevents sex workers from obtaining protection under current health and safety or labour legislation. Criminalization then is an unnecessary reaction to addressing the harms associated with sex work, as criminalization actually perpetuates these harms.

As noted in other aspects of their website, sex workers may have limited options in response to the current social and economic climate in Canada. Criminalizing sex work, POWER argues on their website, further limits their options as having a criminal record makes employment in straight work difficult. Criminalization of sex work perpetuates stigma and creates an othering of sex workers, whether through a criminal record or the stigma associated with being a sex worker. As well, it further marginalizes and alienates sex workers from the community, POWER argues that criminalization takes away the right to sexual and bodily autonomy by criminalizing consensual sexual behaviour. Criminalizing the clients is not the solution and POWER advocates for complete decriminalization.

3.1.3 Maggie's Toronto Sex Worker Action Project (Maggie's)

Maggie's is a sex worker right's organization that is run by and for sex workers in Toronto. On their "About" page, Maggie's presents sex work in a matter-of-fact manner by stating that sex work is real work. In an attempt at combatting

existing understandings of sex workers as “criminal, deviant or victims” (Maggie’s, n.d.), the organization positions sex work as “socially legitimate, important and valuable work”. They welcome people from various forms of sex work, arguing that dancing, street work, domination, etc., are all equally valuable work and therefore deserve to be recognized as a legitimate form of labour.

Maggie’s conceptualizes sex work as “socially legitimate, important and valuable work”, and argues that sex workers “are working people and demand to be recognized as such” (Maggie’s, n.d.).

[W]e are entitled to labour rights; the right to form unions or professional associations; the right to work independently, collectively, or for a third party; and the right to occupational health and safety ... We recognize that sex workers are safer sex professionals and oppose public health policies such as mandatory testing that are founded on stereotypes about us that persecute sex workers rather than genuinely improve public health ... We recognize that the risk of HIV and other STI’s is directly related to poor working conditions created by criminalization and stigmatization” (Maggie’s, n.d.).

By positioning sex work as a form of legitimate work and stigmatized issues associated with sex work as occupational health and safety issues, Maggie’s structures their perspective of sex work as part of the solution (for example, opposing the health and safety problems) versus part of the problem.

Maggie’s does not on their website specifically outline what they believe a sex worker is. Rather they talk about sex workers with respect to sex work being legitimate work and therefore sex workers are “safer sex professionals” (Maggie’s, n.d.).

Maggie’s outlines three ways in which sex work challenges existing stigma and oppression. They state that sex work is not intrinsically dangerous, oppressive

or exploitive. Sex workers face many challenges in Canadian society, whether legally, socially, economically, or politically, and Maggie's argues that the challenges faced by sex workers arise out of oppressive legal and social systems that deny both their rights and their worth (Maggie's, n.d.). Arguably, this position has been affirmed by the court systems in Canada, as the Supreme Court of Canada recently upheld the legal challenge (Bedford v Canada) by sex workers, which argued that the prostitution related provisions in the *Criminal Code of Canada* violated their Charter rights.

Next, Maggie's argues that selling sex is a "pragmatic and sensible response to a limited range of options" (Maggie's, n.d.) and that sex workers who chose sex work as a profession of last resort do so in response to limited economic options. From this, sex work is then not the problem, the economic and social systems that are oppressing sex workers (and workers in general) generates people who have to make decisions on how to survive therefore it is crucial to improve the legal and working conditions of sex workers.

Finally, sex workers are not a homogeneous group of people, they are diverse on many different axes. Consequently, the oppression faced by sex workers is not the same across workers (Maggie's, n.d.). Some workers face additional forms of oppression based on their race, gender identity, socio-economic status, sexuality, ability, and many other factors. Recognizing that sex workers are a diverse group of people allows for the organization to center on sex workers who are most directly affected by discrimination and violence, in order to provide appropriate support and

resources for these people (Maggie's, n.d.), however they do not directly address which sex workers are most directly affected.

Maggie's acknowledges the intersectional nature of oppression that faces sex workers, specifically in discussions of Aboriginal Canadians. The organization recognizes the problematic tension that exists between Aboriginal Canadians, colonialism, and the sex trade. In a document entitled "Indigenous People in the Sex Trade: Our Lives, Our Bodies, Our Realities", Maggie's has issued a statement that was crafted in cooperation with their outreach program, that acknowledges and describes the relationship of Aboriginal People³ in the sex trade and sex work. This statement recognizes that intersectional identities that are part of Aboriginal sex workers (such as adults, two-spirit, trans people, and youth) and that Aboriginal people fit into many of these groups. This document also, consistent with the positions advocated elsewhere on the Maggie's website, argues "not all aspects of sex work are negative. It is harmful when the emphasis is put on drug use and mental health ... we see certain elements of culture changing that do not support people in their choices" (Maggies, n.d.).

Maggie's prudently points out that it is crucial to understand the history of Aboriginal People in the sex trade before moving forward and working to fix the systemic oppressions that Aboriginal sex workers face daily. They argue that

colonization has shaped our [the Aboriginal] community to think sex is shameful. We need to abolish colonization in order to move forward. Violence happens ... because sex work is looked at as a negative profession it validates the violence. The root of this violence comes from colonization (Maggie's, n.d.).

³ In the document, the term "Aboriginal People" is capitalized as such. Recognizing that this is the way they have written it, I too chose to capitalize in the same fashion.

Looking at the exchange of sexual services for compensation as sex work, versus the stigmatizing language of prostitution, has been a critical shift in sex worker rights advocacy (Clamen et al., 2013; Shaver, n.d.). Another notable insight is in differentiating between sex work and sex trafficking. This position is something Maggie's is keen on hitting home on their website, strongly suggesting that the key to reducing human trafficking is to recognize that sex work is about consensual sexual services, whereas trafficking consists of forced or coerced labour (Maggie's, n.d.). Maggie's argues that sex work and human trafficking are not the same thing and that the empowerment of sex workers would stop human trafficking. This result is because "current anti-trafficking laws and policies often do more harm than good, leading to further stigma, criminalization, police harassment, violence, extortions, and deportations of migrant workers while disregarding their actual concerns or needs" (Maggie's, n.d.). By supporting evidence based solutions, Maggie's argues that sex workers are a part of the solution to human trafficking.

Maggie's uses its website to argue that sex work is not the problem, however by supporting the decriminalization of sex work and the recognition of exchanging sexual services for compensation as legitimate labour, most of the issues associated with sex work will dissipate.

3.1.4 PACE: Providing Alternatives Counselling and Education (PACE)

PACE, located in Vancouver, British Columbia, provides programming and support services to sex workers in the region. In their "About" section of their website, they state that they provide these services for "Vancouver's most

marginalized populations; people who often fall through the cracks due to ineligibility for services that require a fixed address or sobriety” (PACE, n.d.). They posit that their organization is made up of people who are committed to providing “sex worker-led and driven programs and services for survival sex work” (PACE, n.d.). They advocate for being an organization that is run by, for and with the cooperation of sex workers.

The PACE website is sparse in its discussion of what sex work is or their conceptualization of sex workers. They do not provide a solid definition of what sex work is to this organization. It is evident though, while they recognize that “sex workers are valuable members of [the] community and are entitled to the same rights as all other human beings”, that their focus is on survival sex workers. While they do not specifically indicate what is meant as survival sex work, in their stated vision they argue that the organization pushes for the eradication of systemic issues, such as poverty, homelessness, and addiction, that contribute to people working as survival sex workers. PACE suggests that by eradicating these issues, people can make “safe, health (sic) and informed decision (sic) in their lives” (PACE, n.d.). These themes of survival sex work, harm reduction, health, and addiction are common throughout the text on their website. There is little discussion of other forms of sex work, or positioning of sex work versus issues such as human trafficking.

PACE uses its website to advocate for the decriminalization of sex work so that the Canadian laws will accurately be able to deal with the harmful problems associated with survival sex work, arguing that these problems arise out of the criminalization of sex work in the *Criminal Code of Canada*. As well, the

decriminalization of sex would alleviate, they argue, social stigma and unsafe working conditions that are problematic to the lives of survival sex workers. PACE has no mention of sex trafficking or contrasting sex work with coerced sexual labour. The majority of their discussion on sex work and the problems associated with criminalization focus specifically on survival sex workers.

3.2.0 Discussion

Through analyzing the ways in which Stella, POWER, Maggie's and PACE conceptualize sex work on their websites, I have identified six common strategies taken by the organizations to present sex work. These themes are: i) contrasting realities with stereotypical assumptions of sex work, ii) sex work as a response to systemic problems and the current economic systems in Canada, iii) problematic categorizations of sex work, iv) intersectionality and diversity in sex work, v) sex work in comparison to sex trafficking, and vi) support for the decriminalization of sex work in Canada. Many of these themes overlap and intersect with each other.

3.2.1 Contrasting realities with stereotypical assumptions of sex work

A frequent strategy that was employed by almost all the organizations on their websites were to disrupt the common assumption that sex work is innately problematic, and instead cast light on what these organizations argue are the real problems that create a dangerous situation for sex workers. Maggie's, for example, states that sex work is "socially legitimate, important and valuable work" (Maggie's, n.d.) in order to challenge the notion of sex workers as criminals, victims, or deviants, where as PACE, while not providing a solid definition of what sex work is,

argues that, contrary to the notion of sex workers as deviants, criminals or public nuisances, sex workers are valuable member and contributors to the community.

This theme is prevalent in Stella's document *Language Matters*, as Stella took nine common terms used to describe people in the sex working community and challenged and problematized the assumptions associated with these terms. Stella argues that language is not neutral, so when discussing sex work it is important to use words that convey the nature of sex work as legitimate and valuable work. Stella argues that "sex workers are often framed in simplistic and stereotypical ways" (Stella, 2013) that inaccurately problematize sex work, instead of focusing on the conditions in Canadian society that foster such stereotypes. POWER recognizes the inaccurate stereotypification of sex workers, specifically in reference to a false notion of sex workers as habitual drug users or addicts. POWER argues that drug use or addiction are not unique to the sex industry and that people who work in the sex industry, like those who work in other industries, have different and varied relationships with drugs or addiction.

PACE does not challenge stereotypical assumptions of sex workers on their website. Their "About" section discusses how they provide services for the most marginalized populations in Vancouver, those who fall through the cracks for reasons such as addiction, a fixed address, and other factors. While their focus is more honed on survival sex workers, PACE also argues in their vision of the organization that the organization pushes for the eradication of systemic issues, such as addiction, that contribute to people having to work as survival sex workers. While they say they service the most marginalized population in Vancouver, such as

sex workers who are homeless, addicts, or those who ‘slip through the cracks’, they do not problematize these categorizations. In doing so, they are reinforcing stereotypical assumptions of who sex workers are, or what Stella and POWER have identified as problematic categorizations of sex workers.

3.2.2 Sex work as a response to system problems / economic climate in Canada

All four organizations use their websites to argue that sex work is a legitimate response to the current economic conditions in Canada. Maggie’s suggests that sex work is a “pragmatic and sensible response to a limited range” of work available (Maggie’s, n.d.). The position that sex work is a better economic choice over minimum wage or low paying straight work is one that has been suggested by other academics who have interviewed sex workers. Specifically, Jeffrey and MacDonald (2006) conducted interviews with sex workers in the Maritimes who describe how sex workers make a cost/benefit analysis to find that working in the sex trade is the best economic option and is an option that allows for flexibility and the resistance of low paying, highly demanding straight work.

This theme emerged on the websites of all the four organizations. Whether it was PACE’s discussion of the reasons why people turn to “survival sex work” or POWER, Stella, and Maggie’s discussing all forms of sex work as pragmatic solutions to the limited options in the labour force, sex work was recognized as a form of labour that needed to be addressed as such. As Maggie’s argues, even if workers are choosing sex work as a profession of last resort, it is then a reflection on the current economic and social systems that are pushing workers to make these decisions in order to survive, thus important to recognize that sex work per se is not the

problem. Criminalization is not the solution. POWER posits that by criminalizing sex work, the government is further limiting the work options of sex workers in the so called legitimate economy as these workers are then stigmatized, may have criminal records, and may find it difficult to be hired in straight work due to having worked in sex work in the past.

PACE supports this position by suggesting that the eradication of systemic issues such as homelessness, poverty, addiction and focusing on harm reduction and health and safety will foster better economic and social conditions for sex workers. Stella recognizes that marginality stems more out of limited option, outdated prostitution legislation, and the current socio-economic conditions in Canada than personal decisions by sex workers. POWER, in agreement with the above three organizations, also recognizes sex work as a viable option in combatting the discrimination marginalized sex workers (such as sex workers of colour, trans sex workers, and gay sex workers) face in hiring practices in the legal labour market.

3.2.3 Problematic categorizations of sex work

Those who have studied sex workers (Doe, 2012; Parent & Bruckert, 2013) have found that sex workers are a diverse group with varying ages, genders, race, ethnicity, origins, and abilities and they are often exposed to multiple forms of oppression. While all four organizations suggest that addressing the problematic categorizations of sex work is crucial in recognizing the value of sex work or to combat existing stereotypes of sex workers, this theme is specifically emphasized on the websites of POWER and Stella. Both have extensive conceptualizations of different categorizations of sex workers but frame their discussion differently. Stella

describes nine sets of terms used to describe sex workers which I have summed them up in three groups: i) sex work as exploitive or victimizing, ii) sex work as marginalizing, and iii) sex work as legitimate labour. POWER frames their discussion of categorizations in terms of addressing diversity in the sex trade industry. Consistent between the two organizations is the understanding that sex workers have different experiences both in life and in the sex trade industry. Stella outlines many different terms that are problematically applied to sex workers (like prostituted women, victims, etc.), and argues that the context they are used in matter.

While the theme – realities and stereotypes – is similar to the theme – problematic categorizations of sex work – both POWER and Stella differentiate between these issues by deconstructing different conceptualizations of sex workers and either the problematic nature or benefits of this. Both have included these sections in documents they have written on sex work; Stella has an infosheet specifically on language and sex work while POWER includes their discussion of diversity in their toolkit for service providers.

3.2.4 Intersectionality and diversity in sex work

Lykke (2010) argues that the diversity amongst sex work and sex workers is vast. In understanding the ways in which women interface with the sex trade industry, it is necessary to account for the ways in which intersections of oppression impact the lived experiences of workers in different ways (Lykke, 2010).

Acknowledging that sex workers are a diverse group, Maggie's argues, is important

in addressing the concerns about discrimination and violence against sex workers as all sex workers are affected differently. POWER, Maggie's and Stella all discuss how sex workers face different forms of oppression based on race, gender identity, socio-economic status, sexuality, ability, and other factors. While POWER and Stella outline many different categorizations of sex worker identities, as described in the previous theme, Maggie's major attempt at intersectionality comes from their discussion of Aboriginal sex workers in Canada and the importance of recognizing the history of Aboriginal People in order to combat the systemic oppression faced by these workers. While the POWER and Stella websites both address Aboriginal sex workers, whether under racialized sex workers or under the category of sex work and Indigenous people, they focus more broadly on different intersections of oppression and diversity in the sex industry. POWER specifically discusses eight diverse relationships that impact the relationship of sex workers with the sex trade industry. Where Maggie's focuses on Aboriginal People and Stella focuses on the importance of language in discussions of sex work, POWER addresses the relationship between race, ethnic origins, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and addiction and the intersections these create with being a sex worker.

The Maggie's website, in a statement written about Indigenous people in the sex trade, highlights the colonial history of Canada that has contributed to the oppression of Aboriginal sex workers, and Aboriginal people more broadly. Previous research by Hunt (2013) highlights how "the rights of Indigenous sex workers will become visible only if we decolonize dominant conceptualizations of sex work and Indigenous women's position within its various sectors" (p. 92), so the statement by

Maggie's and the existence of their Aboriginal Outreach Program contributes in highlighting the nature of Aboriginal sex work.

The PACE website appears confined to limited discussions of survival or street sex work. As mentioned in the previous theme, the PACE website discusses their services as targeted at the most marginalized sex workers in Vancouver, however the website is absent of discussion on what factors influence the marginalization of these women. PACE does mention they began as an organization to help “women, youth, men, and transgender sex workers” (PACE, n.d.), but discussions of intersectional axes of marginalization are absent.

While PACE acknowledges the impact of socioeconomic conditions on marginalized populations, there is little discussion about compounding marginalizations such as race, ethnicity, age, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and so forth. As PACE is located in Vancouver and is focused on helping those who are most marginalized, recognizing the factors that increase marginalization is important. Research on Vancouver sex workers, see Farley and Lynne (2005), found that only 1.7 percent of the population in Vancouver are Indigenous, yet Indigenous women represented 52% of the sex workers they interviewed. Another Vancouver study (Currie, 2000 cited in Hunt, 2013) estimated 70 per cent of street workers in downtown Vancouver were women of Indigenous decent. This is a clear over representation of Indigenous women in street-based sex work (Hunt, 2013), but this discussion is absent from PACE's website.

3.2.5 Sex work in comparison to sex trafficking

Sex work versus sex trafficking is a dichotomy that is addressed on almost all the websites in some fashion, with the exception of PACE. Stella and POWER use terms such as consensual or forced sex work, and Maggie's uses the language of sex trafficking. The key argument amongst Maggie's, POWER and Stella is that sex trafficking or forced / non-consensual sex work is not sex work at all. Stella specifically states that forced sexual labour is abuse or assault and that decriminalization of sex work would help in increasing the success of anti-trafficking campaigns. POWER's position is more difficult to determine. While they do not specifically discuss sex trafficking, they are adamant across their resources that legitimate labour and decriminalization of sex work would help improve the lives of sex workers in Canada. Maggie's takes this position as well, that sex workers are part of the solution to sex trafficking. Maggie's supports an evidence-based solution to sex trafficking, which includes sex workers and the decriminalization of sex work as part of the solution.

3.2.6 Support for decriminalization of sex work in Canada

All four organizations are vocal in their support to decriminalize sex work in Canada. PACE advocates for decriminalization of sex work as it will improve the lives of survival sex workers by decreasing the risk associated with working in the sex trade industry. Maggie's devote time on their websites to discussing what decriminalization is and why it is important. Both POWER and Stella have documents that discuss in-depth the importance of a decriminalization model in Canada. Stella has created an info-sheet specifically about decriminalization and how it is part of a larger struggle for the recognition of sex worker rights in Canada

and globally. They argue that the decriminalization of sex worker would remove the message sent by the *Criminal Code of Canada* regarding sex workers bodily autonomy, self determination, and necessity for safe working conditions. POWER also discusses how decriminalization is the only solution as criminalization removes the rights of people to their sexual and bodily autonomy by criminalizing consensual sexual activity.

Decriminalization as well would have sex work then recognized as legitimate labour and would afford sex workers access to protection under labour laws and legislation in the same way other self-employed workers are. POWER, Maggie's and Stella also recognize that it would allow sex workers to organize, unionize, and fight to protect their rights and negotiate their working conditions.

This final theme of decriminalization highlights the overarching agreement of all four organizations, and the pro-sex work movement more broadly, that the only viable policy option in Canada is decriminalization, and that sex work is socially valuable and legitimate labour. With specific reference to health and safety, there are health and safety issues with many occupations, like sex work, the answer is not eliminating the occupation. The solution instead is to decriminalize sex work so that sex workers can have better access to services, such as health care services, police services and protection under the law, etc., and to safer working conditions subject to regular health and safety standards.

By recognizing sex work as legitimate work, many of the problems highlighted throughout these themes can be addressed. Recognizing that sex work is not

innately dangerous, oppressive, or illegitimate creates a situation where sex work can then be recognized as legitimate work and dealt with accordingly.

3.3.0 Conclusion

On reflection, it is evident that these organizations recognize that language is political and the way in which these organizations conceptualize sex work pushes their specific political agenda. The language used by these four organizations presents sex work in a way that is contrary to the Canadian government. The government of Canada uses terms such as prostitute and prostitution to describe the exchange of sexual services for compensation. The use of these terms by the government reinforces the stigmatization attached to prostitution and perpetuates the misconception of prostitution as deviant criminal behaviour (Hannem & Bruckert, 2013). This stigmatization is reflected in legal code, for example, by having the *Criminal Code of Canada* outline specific actions associated with prostitution as criminal, even though prostitution itself is not illegal in Canada.

In contrast, I found that the websites of Maggie's, POWER, PACE, and Stella very purposively choose not to use the term prostitution. Earlier in this chapter, I outlined some of the problematic categorizations as described by POWER and Stella, and prostitute is quite clearly one such term. While all four organizations embrace a perspective of sex work as legitimate and valuable labour, I found that the organizations strategically use the language of sex work to further this agenda. By discussing sexual labour as sex work instead of prostitution, the organizations repeatedly reinforce their interests and beliefs in the legitimacy of sex work.

Connecting to Castells' (2004) notion of project identity, the strategic use of the language helps to reinforce the identity of sex worker rights organizations and contribute to a larger shift through fighting for legislative change. In this way, the language used by the organizations contributes to building of project identity (see Castells, 2011) and dismantling the stigma associated with the category of prostitution. For example, I found one of the major themes in Stella's discussion of sex work was that of sex work as legitimate work. By shifting discussions of prostitution to that of sex work and labour, Stella's aligns itself with the larger, global movement for sex workers rights and the decriminalization of sex work.

Additionally, Maggie's, Stella and POWER acknowledge the multiplicity of experiences amongst sex workers and their websites reflect an intersectional perspective on sex work and sex workers. The PACE website, however, does not recognize the intersectional nature of sex work on their website. While I cannot conclude that PACE, as an organization, does not embrace an intersectional perspective, the organization should consider broadening their website content in order to capture the diverse experiences of sex workers related to poverty, racism, disability and so on. Providing information about the intersectional nature of sex work would increase the advocacy approach of the organization and this recognition would contribute to providing appropriate resources to sex workers in Vancouver as well as accurate information to non-sex working audiences.

These organizations face a complex situation. They advocate that women should have the legal right to work as sex workers yet the analysis is not complete without addressing the multiple oppressions possible in this field (Hunt, 2013;

Lykke, 2010). However, racism, poverty, patriarchy, homophobia, transphobia, and so on are what is contributing to oppressing sex workers, not sex work itself.

CHAPTER 4: Social Movement Web Use

4.0.0 Introduction

Stein (2009) has argued that for websites to be effective, they should provide information, assist in action and mobilization, promote interaction and dialogue, make lateral linkages, serve as sites for creative expression, and promote fundraising and resource generation. This chapter addresses the questions: i) what communication strategies are used by the four organizations to reach a variety of audiences in the viewing public? ii) what audiences do the four websites target? I found that all four websites do not strongly promote interaction and dialogue or assist in action and mobilization. Sex worker organizations could make more effective uses of their websites to assist in action and mobilization if they promoted interaction and dialogue. Recognizing the importance of influencing public opinion to ensure appropriate legislative changes, all four organizations use their websites strategically to engage with intended audiences.

4.1.0 Effective Social Movement Web Use

This section outlines the ways in which Stella, POWER, Maggie's, and PACE comply with Stein's (2009) six categorizations of social movement web use. I look at how the websites provide information, assist in action and mobilization, promote interaction and dialogue, make lateral links, serve as a space for creative expression, and promote fundraising and generate resources (see chart in Chapter 3).

4.1.1 Provides Information

All four organizations make good use of their websites as sites for disseminating information. It is clear that providing information that counters mainstream media and stereotypical assumptions of sex work is one of the primary motives for the maintenance of these social movement websites. Furthermore, I found that all four organizations are strategic in using their websites to provide the viewer with additional information by linking to outside resources, or by uploading documents, toolkits, reports, and journal articles. Additionally, Maggie's and POWER specifically use their websites as a space to provide press releases detailing the organizations position on specific issues, like the Bedford case, or to raise awareness about upcoming events. All of these strategies contribute to counter stereotypical assumptions of sex work and further the agendas of the organizations.

4.1.2 Assists in Action and Mobilization

Websites can be used to assist in generating action and mobilization for the movement. Websites can serve as a tool for mobilization, assisting in the organization of collective action leading towards the achievement of certain goals (Stein, 2009). Also known as consensus mobilization, websites can be used to coordinate action-oriented initiatives and disseminate ideologies aimed at stimulating action. These are areas of social movement web use that I found all four organizations could use significant improvement. While Maggie's presents calls to action and press releases on their home page for everyone to see and POWER links to PDF's of press releases and calls to action as well, the websites of all four organizations do not actively create action and mobilization on their websites themselves. While all four websites strongly provide information that assists in

building collective identity and generating common goals, such as fighting for the decriminalization of sex work, the websites themselves are not actively used as a space for generating action and mobilization, which Stein (2009) found is a crucial strategy of effective social movement web use.

4.1.3 Promotes Interaction and Dialogue

The promotion of interaction and dialogue is critical to the success of social movement organization's websites. The internet is a significant site of meaning making and knowledge construction, specifically between people involved in both producing and participating in activist and advocacy work (Harlow, 2011; Trere, 2011). Websites allow for interaction and dialogue to occur in order to create consensus mobilization and establish a common understanding of what problems the organization aims to tackle, as well as strategies used to achieve specific outcomes (Stein, 2009). The use of participatory forums, spaces like message boards and chat rooms, allow for interaction and dialogue to occur, resulting in the facilitation of discussion amongst networks of people involved in the social movement organization. This dialogue, much like the other aspects Stein identifies in her typology, allow for the exchange of information that provides alternative perspectives to the national or international discourse (Stein, 2009)

Unfortunately, the four sex workers rights websites do not take full advantage of these possibilities. None of the websites have any participatory spaces for dialogue or interaction. While all four websites have a space for contacting the organization, this space does not generate discussion on the website itself. POWER

is unique from the other three websites as they have a Twitter feed embedded on their homepage, which allows for the viewer to see what POWER is tweeting without leaving the website. As well, PACE has embedded their twitter feed on their News + Updates page, which serves in the same function as the twitter feed on POWER's homepage.

While Stein (2009) has identified participatory forums such as message boards and chat rooms as spaces that would allow for the generation of dialogue and interaction among web users, I suggest that these forums are becoming less significant. Interactional websites have evolved from traditional chat rooms and message boards to include social networking websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, which allows for a new dimension of interaction (Harlow, 2011; Polletta et al., 2013; van Stekelenburg & Boekkooi, 2013). This change has resulted in a shift from creating discussion on the websites of social movements themselves to interacting on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Arguably, this current reality is the future of interaction and dialogue for social movement organizations. If organizations are not using their websites as a site of interaction and dialogue to foster discussion, whether for their members or people outside their organization, they need to supplement this deficiency in another fashion. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter offer this supplementation, as they have become the most common way for people to engage in online activism (Brodock et al., 2009 cited in Harlow, 2011).

4.1.4 Makes Lateral Linkages

Stein defines lateral linkages as “link[ing] social change activists by making them aware of one another’s views and interests by uniting communities of interest across national and transnational spheres” (Stein, 2009, p 754). The use of hyperlinks is key. Hyperlinks, when clicked, take the user to another page, which could be internal (on the same website) or external to the website they are visiting. Hyperlinks can function as a connecting point between allying organizations. Stein describes external links to other websites as a strategic choice, one that acknowledges that other social movement actors may play an important role in providing information to interested parties; information that would support the organization’s goals even though it is coming from a different source. I suggest that this category could also be used by these organizations to support the linkages to social media platforms.

Although the four organizations provide links, the potential is unevenly underdeveloped. For example, Maggie’s and Stella provide many links on their website. These include links to resources, allying organizations, and broader global movements. Stein (2009) describes that, under providing information, organizations need to appeal to both insiders and outsiders. Maggie’s and Stella appeal to both of these audiences in the links they provide. Both websites provide links for sex workers that deal with additional resources workers may need or partnering organizations that deal with sexual assault, Aboriginal people, health care issues, legal issues, and more. Additionally, both websites provide links for outsiders that link to academic information and resources to learn more about the movement for sex worker rights. Furthermore, the Stella website has listed all the logos of the

organizations that they members of or affiliated with, and when the logo is clicked the viewer is brought to the website of the partnering organization. The logos are significant because connecting with affiliated organizations broadens the connection of fighting for the rights of sex workers in Canada to a global social movement for the recognition of sex work as legitimate labour and the protection of sex workers transnationally (Harlow, 2011).

Additionally, Maggie's, POWER, and PACE link to their affiliated social media platforms. On the home page of Maggie's, they have a hyper link that when clicked brings the user to the Maggie's Facebook page. On the POWER website, POWER has embedded their Twitter feed into their homepage, which allows the viewer to read their tweets on the website itself as well as chose to follow POWER on twitter without leaving the homepage. Under the "contact POWER" tab, POWER provides a hyperlink to their Facebook page as well. On the PACE website, PACE has a Facebook and Twitter logo button on the menu bar of their website that is visible no matter what page the user is visiting. This is an F and a T that when clicked brings the user to the Facebook and Twitter pages of PACE, respectively. As well, on their "News + Updates" section, PACE has embedded their twitter feed so that like the POWER page, users can view PACE's tweets on site. Stella does not provide links to their social media pages on their website.

The use of lateral linkages to social media platform would help in augmenting the interaction and dialogue that is missing on these websites by connecting to the Facebook or Twitter accounts of the organizations. Connecting to social media platforms would allow for the exchange of information and interactivity of users

with content and with each other (van Stekelenburg & Boekkooi, 2013) and would allow for the coproduction of content. All four groups should consider shifting the top-down approach of websites, sites that are typically static, to an approach that allows for the exchange of information among multiple people, both sex workers and the supportive public.

4.1.5 Sites of Creative Expression to Transmit the Message

Communication does not always take the form of logical, written language. Instead, websites can serve as sites of creative expression, through mediums such as cartoons, satire, and even pornography (Stein, 2009). Social movement organizations use websites to display art, as the Internet has the ability to portray expression and emotion through a multiplicity of mediums. Examples of this include, but are not limited to, poetry, music, or videos.

All four organizations could enhance their use of creative expression. The use of images on the PACE and POWER websites are minimal. The PACE website presents images of smiling, happy women on their home page. Additionally, on their “News + Updates” section, they have pictures of smiling women, cheque presentations, and a video promoting a theatre presentation that would provide monetary support to PACE. The POWER website has very few pictures and no videos on it. This site is primarily used as a place to provide textual information to the viewer. There are a couple images of people rallying or carrying signs on their websites.

The use of photos containing, what appears to be, people protesting was a common theme among POWER, Maggie’s, and Stella in terms of what images were

used on the websites. Maggie's, Stella and POWER use many images of what looks like people organized, protesting, marching, or yelling. Maggie's had pictures, such as the ones described above, on many of their webpages.

Additionally, Maggie's has a page on their website titled "Sex Worker Media" that contains several videos that were created with sex workers. Maggie's describes this page as "the place where sex workers tell our own stories! We are building this resource so if you know of media made by sex workers, please send it to us!" (Maggie's, n.d.). There are many videos located on this page, including a short film produced for the Transgender Day of Remembrance in 2013.

On Transgender Day Of Remembrance (Nov 20 2013) , Maggie's is honoured to release this film, shot on October 4 2012 at the Sisters In Spirit Vigil organized by the Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto. In this film Monica asks us to honour and grieve the Indigenous trans sisters in the sex industry that we've lost due to systemic abuse and neglect, to demand more-- and to remember those who are still living! (Maggie's, n.d).

Maggie's use of visuals embodies an intersectional feminist perspective on sex work, in that Maggie's presents images that emerge out of different ethnic cultures as well as videos that support transgendered and Aboriginal sex workers, created in conjunction with such workers. For example, Figure 1 shows a picture taken from their "About" page that shows sex workers from Taiwan marching. Figure 2, taken from their "Get Involved" page, shows what is perceived to be a male sex worker holding a sign and protesting in Australia.



Figure 1. Sex workers in Taipei, Taiwan marching. From Maggie's, (n.d.).



Figure 2. Protestor at Mardi Gras parade in Sydney, Australia . From Maggie's, (n.d.).

In short, though some attempts are made to use visuals, all the organizations would benefit from a more full use of the array of types of creative expression.

4.1.6 Provides Fundraising and Resource Generation Opportunities

Stein (2009) argues that social movement organizations can utilize websites to generate fundraising opportunities, whether through monetary donations or resource generation. This can be done through selling merchandise, having a space allocated for donating money, as well as using their websites to recruit new members or volunteers. All four websites do use their website as a space for

fundraising and resource generation. Maggie's, Stella, and PACE offer tax-deductible receipts for monetary donations, however POWER indicates they are unable to do this for their donations.

In discussing the status of the organizations as registered charities, it is necessary to understand the socio-political climate around obtaining charitable status and the regulations in place that govern such status. The Government of Canada and the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA) have a policy statement, CPS-022, which directly addresses the involvement of registered charities in political action (Canada Revenue Agency, 2003). In the policy statement regarding political activities, charities are best positioned to comment on the implications of government policies on the people represented by the charities.

Canadians benefit from the efforts of charities and the practical, innovative ways they use to resolve complex issues related to delivering social services. Beyond service delivery, their expertise is also a vital source of information for governments to help guide policy decision. It is therefore essential that charities continue to offer their direct knowledge of social issues to public policy debates. (Canada Revenue Agency, 2003)

However, the policy then outlines that such information should be presented in a way that allows society to decide for themselves which position on they should take on particular issues. Because of this, the Canadian government has stated that “a charity cannot be formed to retain, oppose, or change the law, policy, or decision of any level of government in Canada” (Canada Revenue Agency, 2003). In most cases, this policy states that registered charities can only use 10% of their resources for political activities (Canada Revenue Agency, 2003), which is still must abide by the restrictions of what this policy constitutes as political activities suitable for charitable organizations. This poses a major challenge for the sex workers rights

organizations in this study as those who are registered charities have to navigate the ability to raise money through providing donors with tax receipts and the freedom to actively criticize the Canadian government and make overt political statements.

Three of the organizations, PACE, Stella, and Maggie's are registered charities and have the ability to provide tax-deductible receipts to their donors. This charitable status positions the organizations as having to abide by the CRA's policy statement on charitable organizations and political activities. As such, POWER is much better positioned to make overtly political statements and actively challenge the Canadian government as they are not forced to navigate around the confines of charitable status.

While I found that all four organizations accept monetary donations, I also found that some of the organizations use their websites to accept donations in different forms. For example, PACE accepts legacy donations, which while still monetary in nature, come through life insurance or RRSPs. They also accept donations of toiletries, make-up, or clothing as well as donations from charitable events that donors host. As well, PACE uses their websites to encourage people to volunteer at the organization or volunteer their services if they have services that will benefit PACE's members. Maggie's accepts donations under the banner of "Hey friends, help someone get ho ready!" where they ask for donations that would help sex workers in their work, such as lingerie, high heels, makeup, sex toys, cell phones, and costume outfits.

4.2.0 Targeted Audiences

Sex workers rights organizations reach out to sex workers to provide resources. In addition, given their goal of changing the conditions associated with sex work, these organizations aim to influence a broader audience as to both appropriate conceptualizations of sex work and legal approaches. The websites can act as powerful venues for reaching both audiences. The internet has become a common place for movements to share information (Brodock, Joyce & Zaack, 2009; Earl, 2013; Harlow, 2011; Trere, 2011). The organizations can use their websites to target specific information to multiple groups, including sex workers and a non-sex working audience.

This section looks at who the focuses of these websites are. Do they target the information on their websites specifically to sex workers? Or do the websites focus more on targeting non-sex working audiences such as community members, politicians, potential donors and allies, and academics?

4.2.1 Sex Working Audiences

While the websites of all four organizations are specifically designed to provide resources to sex workers, the information directed at a sex working audience on their website is minimal in comparison to the literature available on the websites directed at non-sex working audiences. All four organizations use the websites to encourage sex workers to contact the organization directly for further, more detailed information. Given the legal status of sex work, person-to-person interface is a more suitable way to provide tangible resources than using an open webpage. For example, the most common way that I found the organizations' websites reach a sex working audience is by providing a "contact us" section, that is

clearly located on the toolbar on every page. When the visitor clicks this link, they are taken to a page with the email and mailing address of the organizations as well as a phone number. The Maggie's "contact us" section is clearly aimed at sex workers, as they explicitly state **"Researchers, reporters, artists & students who are not sex-workers: please read this note before you contact us"** (original emphasis) (Maggie's, n.d.). POWER's "contact us" page simply takes the user to a page that allows the user to contact via email or Facebook, which makes it unclear as to whether they are addressing a specific audience. Stella provides the people available to be contacted, such as the names of different outreach workers, while PACE's website simply shows the organization on a map with their contact information and hours of operation. While a non-sex working person could contact the organizations via this medium, the presence of contact information is significant in putting sex workers in contact with the organizations.

All four groups address sex working audiences on their websites by the use of news posts or press releases directed at sex workers to warn them of arising problems. Specifically, POWER and Maggie's use their websites to provide press releases and news information directly to sex workers. One example that occurred on both websites was a statement that police officers in Ontario were arranging dates with sex workers, posing as clients. This information is an example of using the website to target sex workers in order to raise their awareness about this situation and to inform them of their rights.

In recent months, the Ottawa Police have visited the homes and work locations of sex workers. POWER has consulted with lawyers who are sex worker allies, and worked with them to draw up this list of your rights as a sex worker in this kind of situation. (POWER, 2014).

The PACE and Stella websites do not use their platform in this fashion.

I found that POWER, Stella, and Maggie's address sex workers specifically in attempting to draw them into their organization by advertising ways for sex workers to get involved with the organization. "Sex workers, Maggie's is here for you. We are not secretly trying to convince you to leave sex work or "rehabilitate" you. Our services and philosophies are rooted in meeting your needs and desires with respect" (Maggie's, n.d.). Maggie's and Stella both describe drop-in locations and hours where sex workers can convene for a variety of reasons and where resources are available for their needs. In addition to discussing drop-in hours or meeting times, Maggie's and Stella, as well as POWER, use their site as a place to advertise events that are open to sex workers exclusively, or sex workers and allies.

The PACE website could benefit from targeting sex workers more directly. While their contact information is listed, the organization uses their website as a space for disseminating information to non-sex working audiences. For example, there is a plethora of information about the history of the organization and types of services they engage in but do not discuss how sex workers can actually employ these services.

The POWER, Stella, and Maggie's website all present resources directly for sex workers. In the toolbar on their webpage, that shows up on every page, all three organizations have a link that uses the language of "sex worker docs" "resources for workers" "things to know" or "resources". On these links, the organizations present documents such as Stella's infosheets, bulletins, tips and tricks for working, legal

resources, and many other documents. Amongst these three websites, links to access to bad trick lists or bad date lists are prevalent.

PACE's website is very limited in its targeting of sex workers. While they describe services they offer, it is in a sanitized fashion that I argue is more focused towards a non-sex working audience. "We provide one-on-one support to Sex Workers to address their immediate needs, while helping them in meeting long-term goals". They focus more exclusively on presenting their content to non-sex working audiences, highlighting the nature of the organization and their successes but are not presenting content that is aimed at sex workers.

While there may be ways of using the websites to target sex workers, the organizations, at the moment, rely on the websites to channel sex workers to access resources in person, for example at the offices or attending drop-in hours. In short, the websites target sex workers by educating them that the organization exists, and encourages them to access resources in person.

4.2.2. Non-Sex Working Audiences

While the four organizations analyzed in this thesis are run by and for sex workers, I found that the content of their websites primarily focus on non-sex working audiences. Specifically, the organizations use the websites to inform the general public, potential donors and allies, academics, and politicians.

General Public

The general public is a significant category to recognize in the wake of the *Bedford v. Canada* ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada and the impending decision by the Canadian government as to the legal status of sex work in Canada.

With sex work being a contentiously debated field of work, one that is commonly discussed in the media, I found that these four websites serve as a site for the average citizen to read information that promotes sex work as legitimate labour.

All four organizations use their websites to appeal to the general public in two main ways: i) through maintaining a news section, and ii) by having a section on their websites dedicated to information about the organizations. All four organizations have links on their home page to 'News' or 'Updates'. These updates include everything from major news, such as the Bedford v. Canada decision, calls to action, or updates about what the organization is up to, such as community events. Additionally, all four organizations provide links to "about" sections, where the mandates and beliefs of the organizations are outlined. Some "about" sections, like Maggie's and POWER, focus more exclusively on the organizations beliefs about sex work. For example, Maggie's "about" section outlines the guiding principles of the organization that detail how they understand sex work. The POWER website presents a brief description of the organization, followed by a clear outline of what they believe. The PACE and Stella about sections focus more concretely on the objectives of the organizations. The PACE website even includes a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section about the organization. Unlike the POWER and Maggie's websites, the Stella and PACE websites both provide the viewer with information about their Board of Directors.

I also found that all four websites provide the public with information regarding the Bedford case. Some websites provided a much more accessible and informative perspective on the Bedford case, such as Stella, some provided news

links about the case, such as POWER and Maggie's, and PACE links to a page that details the success of the Bedford case, but focuses more intently on their role than the case itself. Stella's infosheets serve as the most comprehensive sets of material about the Bedford case and are informative in content and attractive in nature. Both the infosheet series prior to the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada and the infosheet series post-SCC hearing facilitate the learning of a viewer on both the Bedford case, specifically, and sex work, more broadly.

Finally, I found that POWER, Maggie's, and Stella provide electronic libraries and links to the viewer should they want to learn more. The POWER website, for example, contains many documents written by both academics and sex workers that would allow a community member to get a better sense of the landscape of sex work, specifically in the Ottawa/Gatineau area. As well, these three organizations have links to other organizations websites or information and reports created by outside organizations, such as Maggie's "links" section or Stella's "Global movements" section.

Given that the legislative fate of sex workers rests with elected politicians, it is clear that all four organizations recognize that influencing the views of the public is critical.

Potential Donors and Allies

All four organizations utilize their websites to access monetary donations to help keep them functioning. They have donation buttons clearly located on their page, and additionally, sites like PACE and Stella advertise for volunteers to help in

running their organization. PACE specifically suggests that, in addition to donating funds, resources, or time, one could volunteer to be on the Board of Directors.

Moreover, organizations such as Maggie's and POWER have calls to action on their website that invite people to attend events, rallies, and marches in support of sex workers rights or to fill out government issued surveys on their opinion of sex work in Canada. An example of a call to action from POWER: **"CALL TO ACTION: SEX WORKERS NEED YOUR SUPPORT! TELL THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT YOU SUPPORT SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS!"** (original emphasis) (POWER, 2014).

Academics

Were politicians to base legislation on sound research about sex workers, these organizations have vested interest in encouraging such research. All four organizations do use their websites to attract an academic audience, both researchers and students. The websites post information written by or in conjunction with academics. For example, on the POWER website, they have a section titled "POWER docs" where they have four academic reports that were researched and written in the Ottawa/Gatineau area. As well, the section "Ottawa docs", contains an academic article and several theses. Stella's websites has a section dedicated to "Studies and Analysis" where they have their infosheet series posted, as well as other publications they contributed to. Stella's also links to a page that provides access to more information about sex work as a global movement. The PACE website has a page entitled "Research and Advocacy" where they describe their role as

We recognize that Sex Workers are experts on sex work and other issues affecting them, such as access to housing, health care, and legal supports.

Over the past twenty years, we have engaged in community-based and participatory research projects on a wide range of issues that directly impact Sex Workers. We have led several community-based research projects, and have also partnered with researchers at the University of British Columbia, British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, and Simon Fraser University. We actively use our research findings to promote positive changes in policies and practices for Sex Workers (PACE, n.d.).

On this page, they then provide to several academic journal articles that PACE has co-authored. Finally, Maggie's provides access to a "Library" page that is full of external links to more information regarding sex work. It is evident that Maggie's anticipates an academic audience, among others, by the nature of their "Contact" page. On their contact page, Maggie's asks researchers to read a PDF note that they have attached prior to contacting the organization. It reads, in part,

Thanks for your interest in sex work justice. We need people to educate themselves about sex work, do research, study, listen and learn. It is possible to do all of this without exploiting sex workers in the process. We have drafted a few questions to assist you in doing that.

Frequently, simply reading the ample research and journalism sex workers have already offered to the world would answer some or most of the questions we get. See here for our extensive library of resources by sex workers:

<http://maggiestoronto.ca/resources> (Maggie's, n.d.).

In short, these organization use their websites strategically to profile research

by academics and in doing so, they encourage more research in the field, specifically research that is grounded in the lived experiences of sex work and includes the voices of people who have worked in the sex trade industry.

Politicians

It is clear that all four organizations have a political policy to decriminalize sex work in Canada and to gain recognition of sex work and sex workers as valuable, legitimate, and contributing to the community. These organizations use their

websites to provide information to convince politicians of this perspective, however only the POWER and Stella websites pointedly address politicians.

The POWER website has published several open letters to politicians, including foreign ambassadors such as the Ambassador of Turkey and the Ambassador of Sweden. As well, the POWER website has published a document that outlines the 10 reasons why decriminalization is the only suitable prostitution policy option. Additionally, the academic information mentioned in the previous section provides support to the position of the organization directed at politicians.

The Stella website very clearly addresses politicians in the publication of the second infosheet series, that came directly after the decision by the Supreme Court of Canada. In this series, Stella has published documents about the problems with the Nordic model of prostitution regulation, the benefits of the New Zealand model, how decriminalization of sex work is consistent with the public health goals of Canada, information about pimps, managers, and third parties, and finally 10 ways in which politicians can explain prostitution law reform to their constituents. This document outlines 10 questions that address a variety of issues in effort to combat many stereotypical assumptions of sex work and provide evidence based answers for politicians to use to quell constituents fears. Thus although the organizations cannot control whether politicians access the websites, information is available to assist in generating appropriate legislation.

4.3.0 Conclusion

This section has highlighted the audiences that are being reached by these websites and the degree to which the websites of these social movement organizations effectively use their websites as sites of activist and advocacy work. In addressing which audiences are targeted, I concluded that all four websites are predominantly aimed at non-sex working audiences, while also using their websites to encourage sex workers to visit the organization in person.

Additionally, I found that the four websites are lacking in assisting in action, mobilization, promoting interaction, and dialogue. In conducting advocacy work, the four organizations are providing information that counters stereotypical understandings of prostitution to the members of the community who are not already familiar with the discourse of sex work (opposed to prostitution). I found that, while the organizations core membership tends to be sex workers, as evidenced through their about sections discussing who can be members (sex workers or former sex workers) and their websites do provide information for a sex-working audience, the four websites focus more heavily on disseminating information to a non-sex working audience that includes the general public, potential donors and allies, academics, and politicians.

As the websites focus primarily on non-sex working audiences, there is little to no space for sex workers themselves to engage in dialogue, generate discussion, or mobilize on their websites. This strategy is effective in reducing misinformation from being disseminated on the websites, however there is little space for sex workers to interact. Having space for sex workers to interact on the website (such as through platforms like Facebook, Twitter, blogs, or comment sections) allows for

different people to contribute to, produce, and exchange information (van Stekelenburg & Boekkooi, 2013). Given the issues facing sex workers, controlled access to these forums would be paramount. For example, Maggie's has a section on their website that links to a locked forum, accessible by username and password, to submit to the bad date list. Having members only sections of the websites would aid in facilitating interaction and dialogue among members of these organizations, online.

Reflecting on the nature of sex work and the potential for controversial discussion that may be generated on the websites, it may be a conscious decision by the organizations to not have spaces for generating action on the website itself, for several reasons. First, the organizations may not want to put members in a situation where they may be outed as a sex worker by engaging in discussion on the website, as sex work is a stigmatized profession. Members only, locked areas on the website may be beneficial in preventing this outing.

As well, the organizations that are required to abide by the regulations of policy statement on political activities by charitable organizations (Canadian Revenue Agency, 2003) may be influenced by this policy to not encourage outwardly political discussion on their websites, in fear that it would violate the policy on political activities. This is significant for PACE, Stella, and Maggie's as they all have charitable status. POWER is unaffected by this document.

I suggest that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter could act as supplements to the websites of sex workers rights organizations in generating interaction and dialogue and assisting in action and mobilization. While the

organizations do post calls to action on their websites, Facebook and Twitter allow for this material to reach audiences that subscribe or follow the organizations, provide reminders for events, and repost content on a frequent basis. Additionally, if someone is following these organizations on either Twitter or Facebook, the content will show up in the user's social media feed regardless of whether the user has searched for it. Furthermore, users who follow these organizations can invite users who do not follow the organizations to events or suggest that people begin to follow the organizations, assisting in generation mobilization. I suggest that, based on research arguing the effectiveness of social media platforms and activism (Harlow, 2011; van Stekelenburg & Boekkooi, 2013), embracing social media platforms will help to supplement the categories of Stein's (2009) typology of effective social movement web use.

Anecdotally, in support of the use of social media platforms, in conjunction with websites, I follow several sex worker rights organizations on Facebook. I started to follow these organizations as I wanted to keep up with the ongoing updates on the Bedford case but I was searching for a perspective that countered the mainstream media and embraced sex work as legitimate labour. In June of 2013, Maggie's posted an event on their Facebook page encouraging sex workers and allies to attend a march through downtown Toronto, followed by a community gathering, in response to the decision that sex worker rights organizations could not act as interveners at the Supreme Court hearing on June 13th, 2013. This was to be a national day of action and marches were taking place across Canada. A call to action / press release was issued on the website, however I would not have seen it had it

not come across my Facebook page. This event page served to inform me both on what and when the event was, as well as the decision to deny intervener status that led to the necessity of the event. Seeing the event on Facebook (online) led me to attend the march and community gathering (offline) in Toronto to support sex workers in their fight for legal change, supporting Polletta et al's. (2013) idea that social media platforms encourage offline action.

CHAPTER 5: Successes, Challenges, and Goals

5.0.0 Introduction

Whitmore et al. (2011) stress the importance of “successful activism, as described by activists themselves” (p. 8). By looking at the content produced directly by the organizations and presented on their websites, I analyze the information as described by the organizations themselves. This chapter aims to address the questions of (i) how do the four organizations discuss successes and challenges on their websites? And (ii) in what ways do sex worker right organizations use websites to further their goals?

This chapter will present my analysis of Stella, POWER, Maggie’s and PACE in three different sections. First, through the application of modified questions from Whitmore et al., (2011)’s interview guide, I look at how the organizations represent the successes, challenges, and visions of the organization. Next, I explore at how the four organizations present the goals of their organization on their websites. Finally, I examine the extent to which the goals, successes, and strategies presented by the organizations are congruent with their conceptualizations of sex work.

I found that all four organizations stress the importance of advocating for a new position on sex work regulation in Canada and they all argue for a decriminalization model. Additionally, all four organizations believe that changes need to be made in order to ensure that sex workers can live and work with safety and dignity, creating an environment in Canada where sex work is socially valuable and legitimate labour. I found the argued position of decriminalization supports the

goal of all four organizations to work towards decreasing the stigmatization and misconceptions of sex work. Additionally, all four organizations use their website to raise money and generate resources that aid in supporting their goals. The websites are used by sex workers rights organizations as a source of successful activism and advocacy, but I argue that there is untapped potential.

5.1.0 Success and Challenges

In adapting the framework presented by Whitmore et al., I analyzed the website content of Stella, POWER, Maggie's, and PACE by identifying several key themes. I looked at whether the organization identified stories of successful activist work, what forms of success were highlighted, and whether they addressed the conditions in place to foster this success. Following this, I examined whether the organizations describe challenges they have faced and how they overcame these challenges. Some of the websites had stories of success that were individualistic and unique to that organization, while other stories of success were shared or reoccurring across the websites of multiple organizations. Sharing similar stories of success across multiple organizations reinforces the claim made by organizations like Stella, Maggie's, and POWER, that sex workers rights organizations are part of a larger, global social movement in support of sex workers.

5.1.1 Stories of Successful Activist/Advocacy Work

I found that the Stella website presents two sets of unique success stories, however both date back a few years. The first is dedication to celebrating Stella's 10th anniversary, which took place in 2005. This page highlights the successes accomplished by Stella between 1995-2005, celebrating the length of time they have

been open and the accomplishments they have had during this period. Some of the contributions they are most proud of include: operating the organization with diversity, solidarity, empowerment and democracy, contributing to the body of knowledge on sex work academically, maintaining a media presence and raising awareness about the realities of sex work, fighting for social, political, and economic change for sex workers, as well as fighting for the police to protect workers against violence, and overall connecting with, designing tools for, and creating action by and for sex workers. Stella also has a page on their website devoted to recognizing the prizes and special mentions the organization has received between 1997 – 2007. In 1997 Stella won their first award from the Action Committee for Women and Urban Security, in Montreal, for their Bad Tricks and Aggressors List. It is evident from both these pages that Stella has a lot of pride in the successes of their organization and in the work they have done for the sex working community in Montreal. They credit the work of sex workers and allies for the successes seen by the organization and argue that “10 years of dedicated employees [have worked] for better living conditions for sex workers”, and the majority of these employees are sex workers or allies (Stella, n.d.).

Another example I found of presenting successful work conducted by the organization comes in the form of research produced by the organization. Specifically, the POWER, PACE and Stella websites present research that has been undertaken by organizations themselves and written in the form of reports or infosheets. POWER has produced several reports over the past four years including: The toolbox: What Works for Sex Workers, The Toolkit: Ottawa Area Sex Workers

Speak Out, Challenges: Ottawa Area Sex Workers Speak Out, and Taking Action: Canadian Sex Worker Organizing. These reports, all available on the POWER website, outline challenges faced by sex workers, challenges undertaken by sex workers and sex worker organizations, and strategies for service providers. These reports are documents written by sex workers and allies in the Ottawa/Gatineau area and are successful advocacy projects undertaken by POWER. On PACE's website, they have a page dedicated to research and advocacy, where they proudly boast that over the last 20 years, PACE has engaged in advocacy work and research that builds on the experiences of sex workers in their community. They list some of the successful work they have done, such as challenging the constitutionality of prostitution legislation in Canada and actively lobbying the government to improve the safety of sex workers in Canada.

As well, Stella presents two different sets of successful advocacy work that they have curated in conjunction with other organizations. In 2013, Stella published five infosheets on their website addressing the basics of decriminalization, sex work and the Charter, the Bedford case, the language used to discuss sex work, and how to be a good ally to sex workers. These infosheets were released in anticipation of the Bedford case being heard at Supreme Court of Canada and are located on their website under "studies and analysis". In early 2014, after the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously upheld the decision of the lower courts, Stella in cooperation with the Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform (which includes Maggie's and POWER), released new infosheets that address some of the major concerns in popular discourse about the decriminalization of sex work, such as: how to address

constituents if you are a politician, health and concerns, an explanation of the Supreme Court ruling, problems with the Nordic model, benefits of the New Zealand model, and why decriminalization is consistent with the public health goals of Canada.

The documents and reports produced on the POWER and Stella website are examples of successful advocacy work engaged in by these two organizations as they represent the hard work undertaken and the success demonstrated by the hard work of these organizations. I identified documents and reports as a form of successful advocacy as the act of putting the reports on the websites to share with a broad audience, opposed to, for example, publishing the reports academically, allows for anyone interested in learning more about realities of sex work to engage with this material. The actual act of conducting the research may not be considered advocacy work, but the publication of the documents and reports on the websites, for a large scale audience, represents successful advocacy work. In addition, the documents and reports also embody feminist methodologies in that these writings are based out of the lived experiences of people in the sex trade and are being co-created by sex workers themselves (Reinharz, 1992). By displaying these reports and infosheets on their webpage, they are acting as advocates of sex workers by providing reports and research grounded information as to what the current political climate around sex work is in Canada as represented by the people effected the most.

The third website, Maggie's, has little discussion of successful activism by the organization, with respect to telling stories of successful activist or advocacy work.

As they are part of the alliance mentioned above, they do present some of the infosheets in the library section of their webpage, but they are not discussed in the same ways as the Stella website. Where Stella presents this information in its entirety, on their home page, and celebrates their involvement in the creation of these documents, Maggie's has them located in their library with just the title and a hyperlink.

On the Maggie's website, the organization keeps recent news on their home page, where their press releases are visible. Past press releases dealing with the organization success, such as one about the success of the Bedford case, would appear on the home page until the next press release comes out. As well, they highlight the success of some of the organizations members by advertising their speaking engagements. For example "Maggie's - Toronto Sex Workers' Action Project is pleased to be a part of the Law Union of Ontario's Annual Conference. Chanelle Gallant will be speaking on panel Victory at the Supreme Court: What's next for sex work? Monica Forrester will be speaking on Saturday, March 22 at 5pm on the topic of Trans Legal Rights" (Maggie's, n.d.).

I found that, among three of the four websites, Maggie's, Stella, and PACE, each organization describes the services they offer to sex workers in their communities. Not all organizations offer the same services, but the way each organization describes their services on the website could be categorized as stories of successful advocacy work. Maggie's, PACE, and Stella present the services they offer in a way that represents pride and successful advocacy. For example, before listing the services available to sex workers, Maggie's indicates:

Sex workers, Maggie's is here for you. We are not secretly trying to convince you to leave sex work or "rehabilitate" you. Our services and philosophies are rooted in meeting your needs and desires with respect. We offer services to sex workers and to non-sex working agencies and organizations (Maggie's, n.d.).

Stella and PACE also advertise that their organizations can speak to other support groups or academic and community audiences in order to spread their knowledge about the reality of sex work in Canada. Stella advertises

We regularly lecture to community and academic audiences to increase their awareness of the issues affecting Sex Workers. Our lectures focus on how social inequalities, such as sex work criminalization, poverty, and discrimination, negatively impact Sex Workers. We have delivered lectures on a range of topics (Stella, n.d.).

In advertising their services, Maggie's boasts "**over 25 years of history and experience** advocating for sex worker rights as part of local, national and global sex work organizing" (original emphasis) (Maggie's, n.d.). Whether it is drop-in services, as advertised on the Maggie's and Stella websites, harm reduction services, as described on the PACE and Maggie's website, or Bad Date / Bad Trick lists, which are promoted and maintained by Maggie's, Stella, and PACE, these organizations present the many ways in which they are able to help sex workers or have helped sex workers in the past.

In short, PACE most closely fits with Whitmore et al.'s idea of telling a success story. On their homepage, they have a button that says "Our successes: We have worked to promote Sex Worker safety & rights for twenty years. Learn more about our journey and role in the recent Supreme Court of Canada case, Bedford v. Canada" (PACE, n.d.). When you click this button, it takes you to a page titled "We won!" and this page tells a specific story of success in discussing the legal challenges

to prostitution legislation in the *Criminal Code of Canada*. PACE discusses two forms of success within the *Charter* challenge. They celebrate the success achieved from the Supreme Court of Canada decision to uphold the striking down of the prostitution legislation in the *Criminal Code*. Unlike the other organizations discussed, PACE was granted intervener status in the Bedford case. After stating this success, PACE describes successes they have had in a previous court challenge, what they describe as a “parallel case”, similar to the Bedford case, in BC. The BC Challenge was given the go-ahead, but was then stalled in anticipation of a decision in the Bedford case out of Ontario. PACE was granted intervener status at the Supreme Court where a representative from Pivot Legal argued on behalf of PACE.

I found that the Bedford case is the most common experience of success shared across the four websites. All four websites advocate for the decriminalization of sex work in Canada, so the decision from the Supreme Court of Canada to unanimously uphold the striking down of Canada’s prostitution laws was a huge success and recognition of the hard work done by these organizations, amongst others, that fight for the rights of sex workers in Canada as they are advocating on behalf of those who are directly effected by the prostitution legislation in Canada. As discussed, PACE has an entire page dedicated to celebrating their win in court. Stella published their second set of infosheets in response to the decision of the Supreme Court in order to educate sex workers, politicians, and the community on what the decision means and how to move forward. While Maggie’s anticipated the decision of the Supreme Court, they published on their website a list of events and press conferences taking place across the country on December 20th, 2013, the day of the

decision. Shortly after the handing down of the decision, they released a press release that while the Bedford case was successful, challenges still persist in persuading the Canadian government to adopt a decriminalization model of prostitution regulation and thus asked for future support from members and allies in contacting the government. Support was solicited through asking members to write to their members of Parliament and to fill out surveys issued by the Canadian government, to be further discussed below.

POWER also released a press release, on the day of the decision, celebrating the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in “upholding the Charter rights of sex workers and striking down the outdated and stigmatizing laws criminalizing sex work” (POWER, 2013). This decision, POWER argues, opens the door for the recognition of sex work as legitimate work and the ability for sex workers to work with safety and dignity. Celebrating the success of the Bedford case, however, is not without challenge. As noted in the press release by Fred Chabot, Vice-Chair of POWER, “Today is a day to celebrate [however] our work doesn’t end here” (POWER, 2013). While the Bedford case is a shared success across all four websites, it also poses future challenges for the organizations and sex workers alike.

5.1.2 Obstacles and Challenges

While all four websites present the Bedford case as a story of successful advocacy work, this case posed challenges before the case was heard at the Supreme Court and also following the unanimous decision. One of the major challenges presented on the websites prior to the Supreme Court of Canada hearing the Bedford case was a fight for Maggie’s, Stella, POWER and PACE to be granted

intervener status and given the ability to speak on behalf of the sex workers represented by these organizations. Stella, POWER, and Maggie's were denied the ability to intervene on behalf of sex workers. POWER released a press statement on May 2nd, 2013, that addressed the concerns of the organization in having the coalition of sex-worker led organizations denied intervener status:

The POWER-Maggie's-Stella coalition was the only intervener applicant representing sex workers from all sectors of the sex industry and multiple geographic regions in Canada. Our voices are essential to understanding the full impact of criminalization on both street and indoor sex workers, and particularly the impact of the criminalization of third parties (living on the avails) on all sex workers. Kara Gillies, a sex worker and long- time member of Maggie's reflects that, "When POWER and Maggie's intervened in *Bedford* at the Ontario Court of Appeal, we were able to share sex workers' perspectives and experiences that the Court would otherwise not have heard. It's a shame that this time around, both sex workers and the judiciary will miss out."

Émilie Laliberté, director at Stella and spokesperson for the Canadian sex worker coalition, states "The Supreme Court of Canada's unwillingness to take the voices and perspectives of sex workers into account -- in a hearing on laws with a major impact on their safety and dignity -- is incomprehensible to us." (POWER, 2013).

From a press release from Maggie's later that month, "the (not so Honorable) Justice Richard Wagner of the Supreme Court of Canada has decided, in denying sex worker led organizations intervener status in the hearing, that our voices do not matter" (Maggie's, 2013). The Stella website does not address this issue, however in their infosheet on *Challenging Prostitution Laws: Bedford v. Canada*, they dedicate a section to interveners and argue that the ability of Maggie's and POWER as a coalition and PACE with PIVOT to intervene was beneficial to at the Ontario Court of Appeal, so the denial at the Supreme Court of Canada was problematic.

The denial of intervener status of Maggie's, POWER, and Stella was a major obstacle that these organizations had to overcome, and they used their websites to do so by coordinating offline action. In the press release issued by Maggie's, mentioned above, the purpose was to garner support for a National Day of Action to support sex workers on June 8th 2013. Maggie's press release was for a Toronto-based day of action that would consist of a march through downtown Toronto and a community gathering featuring Terri-Jean Bedford herself. The purpose of this day of action was to show support for the decriminalization of sex work regardless of the denial of intervener status, days before the June 13th hearing at the Supreme Court of Canada. Maggie's also published a media advisory two days before the event and followed up with a post on their website discussing the success of the national day of action, including pictures of the event.

POWER also used their website to gather support for their event on this national day of action, June 8th, in response to the denial of intervener status. They issued a press release that called on all sex workers and allies to organize at the Human Rights Monument in Ottawa on June 8th, where there would be an educative teach-in featuring guest speakers discussing the problematic nature of the criminalization of sex work in Canada. Being in the Ottawa/Gatineau area, they also issued a press release on their website to garner support for a rally at the Supreme Court of Canada on June 13th, the day of the Supreme Court hearing. This rally would occur on the steps of the Supreme Court, and as per their press release was supported by members of POWER, Stella and Maggie's. This press release also

included a lot of information about the court challenge, criminalization, and the problems with the Nordic model.

In contrast, this was not a challenge for PACE as they achieved intervener status. However, prior to the Bedford case, PACE faced obstacles regarding the BC challenge. On their website, PACE describes joining with SWUAV and Pivot Legal, and challenging the constitutionality of Canada's prostitution laws. They were told by the government that because no one involved this challenge had been charged with a prostitution offence, nor were working as active sex workers, the organization did not have legal standing to bring forward this case. This was a major challenge. They continue on their webpage to describe how, on behalf of PACE and SWUAV, Pivot Legal's lawyer brought this issue of legal standing to the Supreme Court of Canada, where it was ruled that SWUAV and PACE could resume their case against the constitutionality of prostitution legislation as they hold public interest standing. This successful decision, as PACE notes on their "we won" page, was a major landmark ruling by the Supreme Court and a huge win for PACE. But since the case of Bedford v Canada was taking place in Ontario and the BC Challenge was then put on hold pending the decision in Ontario.

The other major challenge that was presented on the websites of Maggie's, POWER, and Stella, but was not present on the PACE site, was how the Canadian government after the Bedford ruling will change the legislation concerning prostitution. The government conducted a public consultation, online, where they posted five questions to the Canadian public about their position on what the legal status of prostitution in Canada should be. This questionnaire allowed for any

Canadian to go onto the government website and fill in and submit their responses. In order to ensure that the position of decriminalization is represented in these responses, Stella, Maggie's, and POWER all released a Call to Action, letting members and allies know that "this is an opportunity for you to support sex workers' right to work in safety and dignity. [We are] calling on sex workers and allies to participate in this consultation to help shape the government's response." (POWER, 2014). All three organizations presented tips on how to answer the questions, suggestions on sending the answers to the MP in the responder's area, and providing links to where to go to respond in both English and French. For the actual questions posed by the government, each organization provided sample answers from the perspective of their organization and additional points that could contribute to a strong answer for different responders. They encouraged unique answers, in that they asked responders to not just copy and paste the organization's answers but to provide their own perspectives as well. By providing suggestions on how to answer the questions, with clear directives on where to go and tips to help make the process easier, POWER, Stella, and Maggie's have used these press releases and calls to action as a way to overcome the challenges of both having a voice in the changing legislation and actually getting people to spend time on filling in the responses. The impact of this survey is yet to be felt as the Canadian government is still in the process of introducing legislation.

Not all of the challenges and obstacles described on the website deal specifically with the organization as a whole, instead on both the Maggie's and POWER website, they discuss an obstacle that members of their organizations are

facing in their community. In late 2013 and early 2014, reports of police officers posing as potential clients and raiding the homes of sex workers were showing up in Toronto, Kingston and Ottawa. In what was described as attempts to “combat trafficking”, the Maggie’s online news article describes the situation as “under covers [officers] are using [phone numbers and] are booking calls under false pretenses using the name "John". Police arrive in teams of up to four officers, search residences, demand ID and collect data on the worker” (Maggie’s, 2014). In order to combat this challenge, in the press release from Maggie’s, the organization provides tips for sex workers about what to do if the police show up to their residence and what rights they have. They also provide information about search warrants and collecting evidence, as well as how to go about getting legal advice if this type of incident had happened to them. After the initial press release from POWER about this problem, the organization released another document containing similar tips and advice as Maggie’s for their members.

5.2.0 Visions of the Future

Whitmore et al., identify a question in their interview guide that asks “imagine you fall asleep for five years, when you wake up, what would you hope to see in your group/organization” (Whitmore et al., 2011, p. 25). In adapting their framework of appreciative inquiry, I am examining whether the organizations identify a vision of the future and whether they include a path to achieve this vision. I found that all four websites identify visions of the future for sex workers in Canada, including: sex work is decriminalized; sex workers can work with safety

and dignity free from discrimination, violence, and stigma; sex workers are afforded equal rights under Canadian law; and the government commits to the eradication of poverty, homelessness, and addiction.

Decriminalization is the most common vision and the only option the organizations promote. For example, Stella's has created documents on why decriminalization is the future of sex work in Canada as well as problems with other models of sex work regulation. "The Canadian sex worker rights movement has called for the decriminalization of sex work for more than 30 years ... [and] is part of our larger struggle for the recognition and actualization of sex workers rights" (Stella, 2013). In their mission statement, Maggie's also advocates for "the removal of all laws that criminalize sex work" (Maggie's, n.d.). POWER has produced a document that can be found on their homepage that outlines the 10 reasons to fight for the decriminalization of sex work in Canada. PACE believes that with decriminalization there can be "long-term commitments to social change within all levels of government and individual citizens to eradicate systemic issues that lead to survival sex work such as poverty, homelessness, health and addictions" (PACE, n.d.). It is very evident from all four websites that they envision a future for their organizations and their members where sex work is decriminalized in Canada.

Also common was a vision of the future where sex workers are treated with safety and dignity and where sex work is recognized as socially valuable and legitimate work. PACE, in their mission, has a specific section for "vision" where they argue that:

We envision a future where all Sex Workers are free from the risk of violence, discrimination, social stigmas and harms so they may enjoy the same rights as all other Canadian citizens, including the rights to life, liberty, security of the person and equal protection under the law. (PACE, n.d.).

As well, POWER outlines their vision as of

a society in which sex workers are able to practice their professions free of legal and social discrimination, victimization, harassment and violence and in which sex work is valued as legitimate and fulfilling work making an important contribution to society (POWER, n.d.).

In their vision for the future, PACE also identifies

hope for long-term commitments to social change within all levels of government and individual citizens to eradicate systemic issues that lead to survival sex work such as poverty, homelessness, health and addictions so that individuals can make safe, health and informed decision in their lives (PACE, n.d.).

5.3.0 Organizational Goals and the Needs of Sex Workers

5.3.1 Goals

All four organizations present their goals on their websites, while the language varies from goals to objectives, missions, or visions that they work to achieve.

Located in their “Mission + History” page, PACE outlines the mission and vision of the organization. Specifically, the organization posits that they aim to

“promote safer working conditions by reducing harm and isolation through education and support” (PACE, n.d.).

Like the PACE website, Maggie’s presents their goals in the form of a mission statement to “provide education, advocacy and support to assist sex workers to live and work with safety and dignity” (Maggie’s, n.d.). They follow with guiding principles of the organization which outline the reasons they believe that sex workers should be able to work safely and legally, as well as the reasons they follow the “nothing about us, without us” philosophy. These principles describe sex work as both real work and socially legitimate, important, and valuable work (Maggie’s, n.d.). Also, they address how sex trafficking is not the same as sex work, sex work is empowering in stopping human trafficking, and that sex work itself is not inherently dangerous, nor is it exploitive or oppressive (Maggie’s, n.d.). They then suggest that selling sex is in fact a legitimate response to the limited range of options for work. As well, the oppression of sex workers is not something that affects all sex workers in the same way. Maggie’s advocates for the decriminalization of sex work in that all laws that criminalize sex work should be removed from the *Criminal Code of Canada*. They also recognize that sex workers do care about safe sex in their profession; therefore they are opposed to public health policy that would mandate STI testing. Maggie’s, sees themselves as a small organization in a larger international sex workers rights movement, so they work in coalition with other organizations that support the sex workers (Maggie’s, n.d.).

On the Stella website, the organization lists their goals under their “Who are we?” page. On this page, Stella goes into detail about the objectives and activities of

the organization. They directly outline what the goals of the organization are on this page. The goals Stella describes are:

To provide support and information to sex workers so that they may live in safety and dignity; to sensitize and educate the public about sex work and the realities faced by sex workers; to fight discrimination against sex workers; [and] to promote the decriminalization of sex work (Stella, n.d.).

They also describe the organization as one that favours empowerment and solidarity for sex workers which is consistent with their goals to work for the rights of sex workers to work with safety and dignity, as well as their recognition of sex work as valuable labour with a meaningful place in society.

POWER presents the goals of their organization by discussing their vision for society and the beliefs of their organization. Located on their “About POWER” page, POWER argues that they believe sex work is valuable work and therefore sex workers should be entitled to the same rights as non-sex working people. They clearly state that the decriminalization of sex work is paramount to sex workers rights, and that by fighting for sex workers rights they are contributing to safer communities for everyone. As well, POWER believes that fighting for sex workers rights in Canada is a part of a larger struggle for the recognition of sex workers rights globally. They argue that they must develop strategies in order to reduce the violence experienced by sex workers.

5.3.2 Goal Congruency and Conceptualizations of Sex Work

The organizations, with the possible exception of POWER, make good use of the websites to explicate goals that are directly congruent with their conceptualizations of sex work.

PACE views the goal of their organization as having the responsibility to facilitate harm reduction and increased education for and by sex workers in the Vancouver area. Throughout their website there is an underlying assumption that PACE is primarily focused on street or survival sex workers. This focus is evident in the recognition of homelessness, addiction, and health issues commonly associated with street sex work. Little discussion is paid to other forms of sex work.

With the goal of harm reduction and increased education in mind, PACE presents support service programs that facilitate the organization in supporting sex workers and achieving their goals.

Our Support Services program is the backbone of our organization, and consists of one-on-one support, drop-in services, and peer outreach. Our Support Services program operates under an asset-based and harm reduction philosophy. We understand the importance of providing non-judgemental services and building upon the strengths and experiences of Sex Workers. (PACE, n.d.).

The organization also presents programs that deal with violence prevention, public education, and research advocacy. While the focus of PACE appears narrowly limited to survival or street sex workers, I found that they clearly present the support and services offered from their organization to sex workers in order to actualize their goals or mission. They work to both better the lives of street sex workers and support them while educating the public and contributing to research from a supportive stance of sex work.

I found that Maggie's is an excellent example of using a website to explicate services that are aligned with their goals. Maggie's presents their mission as one that focuses on supporting sex workers through increasing education about sex work, providing advocacy and support services to sex workers and facilitating the

push for safer working environments and decreased stigmatization of sex workers. With respect to aiding sex workers in working under safer conditions, Maggie's has a section of their website dedicated to resources for sex workers. They provide sex workers with helpful documents that address issues such as: newness to the sex trade industry, information on legislation changes, guides for working in stripping and exotic massage parlors, information regarding licensing, and information for escort workers. As well, they provide additional resources for male sex workers, phone sex operators, sex workers of colour and LGBT sex workers, and sex workers who work with people with disabilities. These documents can be accessed through the website and are available to sex workers as long as they have access to an internet connection. These resources support Maggie's presented mission of providing advocacy and support services to sex workers.

Aside from digital resources, Maggie's presents a list of services offered to sex workers on their "Get Involved" page. These are tangible resources, accessible in person, that include services such as a bi-weekly drop-in lounge, an Aboriginal Sex Work and Outreach Project, a monthly group called the Real Work group, assistance and advocacy for sex workers who are or have experienced harassment or discrimination based on working in sex work, legal support such as court accompaniment, and a safe place for workers to meet, discuss their work, socialize, attend sex worker-led workshops, and obtain resources and safer sex materials. Maggie's is a registered charity, as such, they offer sex workers who were given community service by the court for any criminal offence can do these hours through Maggie's.

Finally, Maggie's provides sex workers direct access to The No List on their website. The No List is a database that contains information about, what Maggie's describes as, time-wasters and bad dates. This is a searchable online database that is accessed only through username and password and sex workers can get this access information by contacting Maggie's outreach through email.

Stella is also an excellent example of using a website to clearly articulate organizational goals that focus on providing support and resources to sex workers to aid in sex workers working with safety and dignity, as well as to increase education about the realities of sex work to fight against the discrimination faced by workers and to decriminalize sex work. Stella presents services for sex workers in order to achieve their goals and empower and inspire solidarity amongst sex workers, such as a drop-in centre, a Bad Tricks and Assaulters List, a monthly bulletin, which also contains the list, a bi-annual magazine, and services for various sex workers, including street working sex workers, escorts, masseuses and dancers. As well, the website advertises many in-person activities for sex workers such as workshops and meals, which are listed in the monthly bulletin.

POWER's presentation of their goals is more ambiguous than the other three organizations, and therefore there is not a clear link between their goals and their services. Although they present a vision of the future that focuses on decriminalization and a struggle for a recognition of the rights of sex workers in Canada, they do not clearly list what the goals of the organization are. It is clear, however, that the emphasis placed on decriminalization and safer working conditions for sex workers is consistent with the philosophy of the organization that

recognizes sex work as socially valuable and legitimate labour. As well, through the production of several academic reports and linkages to reports by other organizations, POWER contributes to the fight for social justice and contributes to deconstructing the misconceptions about sex work and providing the realities of sex work as part of a larger social movement. I found that POWER's website focuses more on disseminating information to a viewing public, as opposed to providing information to sex workers themselves. While the website provides links to Stella's infosheets, the website focuses more on dismantling the stereotypical assumptions about sex work and sex working people through academic literature and reports that are produced with the collaboration of sex workers. This serves to disrupt assumptions about sex work and contribute to the destigmatization of sexual labour.

5.4.0 Conclusion

Appreciative inquiry focuses on success based thinking and the ways in which examining successful activist and advocacy work, as well as understanding how organizations have overcome challenges to their goals, will contribute to more successful activist or advocacy work. Stella, POWER, Maggie's and PACE use their websites to highlight successes in their organizations, however PACE is the only website that explicitly celebrates victories on their websites. PACE's page on their website titled "we won" is dedicated to celebrating the successful role of the organization in the Bedford case. While Stella recognizes awards and special mentions on their website in celebrating 10 years of activist work, this page comes from 2007 and does not celebrate any successful work conducted from 2007

onwards. The websites would be more useful if they discussed success with the Bedford case and in helping workers in the Montreal area.

Maggie's, POWER, and Stella would benefit from following PACE's lead in more overtly celebrating successful activist work. Not only would this recognition foster more successful activist work, as suggested by Whitmore et al., (2011), this information would provide both sex working and non-sex working audiences with an understanding of how these organizations are implementing their philosophies in a real life, practical manner. For sex workers seeking support, clear understandings of how these organizations have acted on behalf of and supported sex workers would reinforce the philosophy of these organizations as safe spaces for sex workers. Similarly providing counter information to mainstream media for the general public, politicians, and academics (Stein, 2009) would give them access to information about successful sex worker activism grounded in the lived experiences of sex workers themselves. Finally, by amplifying the representation of successful activist work on their websites, the organizations would create a stronger case for why people should donate money or resources to support their efforts.

Overall, I found that the four websites do a good job at explicating three themes that occur throughout all the organizations. First, all of the websites stress the importance of advocating for changes to the legislation in Canada in order to allow sex workers to work and live with safety and dignity. This leads into the second common theme in which all four organizations advocate for the decriminalization of sex work in Canada. I agree that this position is key to fostering a country where sex work is socially valuable and sex workers can live and work

safely. As well, decriminalization of sex work contributes to the goals of all four organizations to decrease the stigmatization and misconceptions around sex work and increase education about the realities of sex work. Finally, all four organizations use their websites as a site of resource generation and fundraising. Raising funds through their website, as well as asking for tangible resources to be donated, allows for the organizations to continue to work towards achieving their goals and supporting sex workers in their communities.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.0.0 Websites as a Site of Activist and Advocacy Work

In this thesis, I set out to address the question of: how do sex worker right's organizations use their websites as a site of activist and advocacy work? In order to answer this question, I generated several points of inquiry: i) How do various organizations conceptualize sex work on their websites, and to what extent do they incorporate an intersectional feminist perspective? ii) What communication strategies are used by the four organizations to target audiences in the viewing public? iii) What audiences do the four websites target? iv) How do the four organizations discuss successes and challenges on their websites? v) In what ways do sex workers' rights organizations appear to use websites to further their goals?

Three central conclusions were drawn from this study. 1) All four organizations strategically use their websites to disseminate a political agenda and circumvent traditional forms of mass media. 2) Three of the websites recognize the intersectional nature of sex workers is crucial in addressing sex work as a profession. 3) None of the organizations utilize the full potential of their websites to provide open or locked interactive capabilities. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter could serve to augment the use of websites by sex workers rights organizations, especially in a locked format.

6.0.1 Disseminating a Political Agenda

Incorporating Stein's (2009) framework of social movement web use, I conclude that the four organizations provide abundant information that counters mainstream discourses on sex work. All four organizations clearly articulate the

goals, motives, missions, and visions of their organizations. By providing counter information to mainstream, stereotypical understandings of sex work, Stella, POWER, Maggie's and PACE are acting and speaking on behalf of and in solidarity with sex workers in Canada and using their websites as a site of advocacy work. The goal of the websites of the four sex workers rights organizations is not to convince people to purchase sex or to act as a broker for sexual services. As sex work has come to be defined as a social problem (Brock, 2009), it is important for the organizations to deconstruct this understanding. Instead, then, the organizations use their websites to argue on behalf of sex workers, advocating for the complete decriminalization of sex work in Canada and presenting information, research, and experiences that contribute to an understanding of sex work as socially valuable and legitimate labour.

In putting forth their agenda, the organizations purposively target specific audiences in order to effectively spread their message. For example, if the organizations are able to successfully influence the general public to adopt appropriate conceptualizations of sex work, politicians supporting a decriminalization perspective will have an easier road to passing this legislation. Politicians have to answer to their constituents, and the organizations recognize this. For example, Stella has published an infosheet specifically aimed at ways in which politicians can answer common questions that their constituents, the general public, may pose. Additionally, by posting studies conducted by or in conjunction with academics, the organizations lend the credibility associated with the academy

to their position on decriminalization. This can contribute to influencing the views of politicians by providing sound research on the field.

The government of Canada also claims interested in the opinion of the general public. In the wake of the Supreme Court decision in the Bedford case, the government solicited the opinions of everyday Canadians by asking them to participate in a public consultation, an online survey expressing their views on sex work in Canada. Maggie's, POWER, and PACE then used their websites to encourage sex workers and allies to fill out the survey, arguing for the recognition of sex work as legitimate labour and calling on the government to decriminalize sex work. They also provided sample answers and suggestions for filling out the survey and encouraged the responders to forward their response to their local MPs.

In pushing forward for the decriminalization of sex work, it is evident among all four websites that these organizations combat prominent stereotypical assumptions of sex work, such as sex work as inherently dangerous and sex workers as inherently deviant. A frequent strategy employed by these organizations is to highlight what the stereotypical assumptions of sex work are and then provide the reality of sex work as the organization sees it.

By providing what they consider accurate conceptualizations of sex work, the organizations dispel many of the myths associated with sexual labour. For example, The websites of Maggie's, POWER and Stella all differentiate between sex work and sex trafficking, or forced or non-consensual sex work. Many arguments that posit sex work as inherently problematic link sex work with exploitation and sex trafficking. The websites of Maggie's, POWER, and Stella do not conflate these two

categories together: instead they separate them and argue that sex work and sex trafficking are not synonymous. “Where people do not consent in providing sexual services for money, this is abuse or assault, not work” (Stella, 2013). As Maggie’s (n.d.) argues in their guiding principles,

Sex worker empowerment stops human trafficking (original emphasis). Current anti-trafficking laws and policies often do more harm than good, leading to further stigma, criminalization, police harassment, violence, extortions and deportations of migrant sex workers while disregarding their actual concerns or needs. Maggie's supports *effective, evidence-based* (original emphasis) solutions to the problem of human trafficking that locates sex workers as a key part of the solution. We support open borders and labour and human rights for undocumented workers (Maggie’s, n.d.).

The perspective presented on the websites of Maggie’s, POWER, and Stella arguably embodies a sex-positive feminist perspective in that they are arguing for the decriminalization of consensual sexual activity. None of the organizations advocate on the behalf of sex trafficking. Instead, they argue that the government should not criminalize consensual sexual activity or consensual sex as work. Furthermore, I argue that the push for decriminalization by all four organizations, including PACE, represent a sex-positive perspective in that decriminalization of sex work in Canada would embrace the fact that criminalizing consensual sexual activity is problematic.

Throughout history, social movements have emerged in attempts to combat social problems and create new social order, specifically in response to a threat or with the goal of creating change (Touraine, 2002). The dominant neoliberal ideology has consistently had negative effects on women, among others, fostering a situation where individuals and organizations emerge to challenge neoliberal policy (Coulter, 2009 cited in Anderson, 2013; Whitmore et al., 2011). I found that Maggie’s, POWER,

PACE and Stella all provide information on their websites that combats the neoliberal agenda of individualization and instead argues that the government and the economic climate in Canada create dangerous situations for sex workers. Therefore, sex work itself is not inherently dangerous, but the conditions around sex work regulation are problematic and the government is responsible for making changes to fix the dangerous conditions associated with sex work. All four organizations advocate for shifting the blame away from sex workers and onto systemic problems, consistent with research that suggests a shift in focus from sex work as problematic to understanding the social, political and economic issues that foster a need to work in sex work (Brock, 2009). For example, in PACE's mission they argue that

We hope for long-term commitments to social change within all levels of government and individual citizens to eradicate systemic issues that lead to survival sex work such as poverty, homelessness, health and addictions so that individuals can make safe, health and informed decision in their lives (PACE, n.d.).

The current state of the economy following the 2008 crisis makes it incredibly difficult for people to find employment in what is considered the formal economy. According to Maggie's (n.d.),

Sex work is not intrinsically dangerous, oppressive or exploitative (original emphasis). Most of the problems sex workers experience are a result of legal and social systems that disregard our rights and worth. We work to end these oppressive systems, not to "rescue" sex workers.

Maggie's argues that, in recognizing that some sex workers may chose sex work as employment of last resort,

Selling sex is a pragmatic and sensible response to a limited range of options (original emphasis). Where people are doing sex work but would rather not be, it is this lack of options that is the problem – not sex work

itself. Women, young people, trans women, people of colour and Indigenous people often face limited economic options. For many, sex work is the best or only option for work and we work to improve the conditions of work (Maggie's, n.d.).

Criminalizing sex work is not the solution. POWER argues that in criminalizing sex work, the government of Canada would then be further limiting the options available to sex workers in finding employment. Having worked in a criminalized sector such as sex work can limit opportunities to find employment in straight work due to the stigmatization of working in criminalized work and potentially having a criminal record.

Stella, POWER, Maggie's, and PACE clearly use their websites as a space for advocating on behalf of sex workers in Canada, promoting a model of sex work as legitimate labour, challenging stereotypical assumptions, and pushing for the decriminalization of sex work. The use of their websites is two-fold. Primarily, the websites serve as a space for providing information to both sex working and non-sex working audiences. In doing so, the organizations lay out information, research, experiences, successes, goals, etc. However, they cannot provide tangible support to sex workers through their websites. Thus, the second function of the website is to funnel sex workers to the actual brick and mortar location of the organization or sites of action. For example, the Stella and Maggie's websites advertises for sex workers to come join them at their drop-in location. Additionally, the PACE website lists the location of the organization in their contact section. All four organizations provide spaces for sex workers to get in contact and connect with the organization. In short, the organizations use their websites primarily as a space for disseminating their agenda to non-sex working audiences, such as the general public and

politicians, while still informing sex workers of the existence of the organization and encouraging them to get involved offline, as discussed in Chapter 5.

6.0.2 Intersectionality in Sex Work

Decriminalization of sex work would create space for understanding the problems associated with systems of racism, classism, sexism, imperialism, ect, associated with the diversity of people engaged in sex work (Van der Meulen et al., 2013). It is crucial that the organizations advocating on behalf of sex workers in Canada embrace an intersectional perspective of sex work as people working in the sex trade industry may interface with multiple forms of marginalization. As well, the websites may be the first point of contact for sex workers looking for support. If the organizations position themselves as intersectional, representing this on their websites will demonstrate to workers looking for support whether or not the organizations will be able to provide them the resources they need. The information the organizations present online should then represent the realities and complexities of the sex trade industry, while combatting stereotypical assumptions of what a sex worker looks like. In addressing the complexities of the sex trade industry online, the four organizations tended to take one of three approaches: i) address intersectionality; ii) discuss the diverse aspects of the sex trade industry; iii) no discussion of intersectionality. There is some overlap in attempts to discuss intersectionality with discussions of diversity.

The Maggie's website is the best example of effectively incorporating an intersectional perspective on sex work. The organization advertises their Aboriginal

outreach group on their website. As well, they present the intersectional nature of the organization in its' guiding principles.

The oppression of sex workers does not affect everyone the same way (original emphasis). Some face additional oppressions based on racism, colonialism, sexism, transphobia (trans-misogyny in particular), poverty, homophobia, because they have been to prison, use drugs, are youth or because they have disabilities. Often these sex workers face much higher rates of violence and discrimination. We centre the experiences of these sex workers who are the most directly impacted by violence and discrimination in our analysis, in building broader and stronger coalitions and in developing holistic solutions that address *all* the issues that affect sex workers' lives (Maggie's, n.d.).

Sex workers viewing this website would be able to clearly identify that any sex worker, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, or ability, are welcome at Maggie's. They

welcome workers of all genders from all areas of the sex trade - street-based sex workers, exotic dancers, escorts, pornography actors, phone sex operators, professional dominants and submissives, erotic massage workers, web cam workers, and others - to join us in our fight to control our own bodies, sexuality and working lives (Maggie's, n.d.).

In discussing the complexities of the sex trade, the material published on the

POWER website focuses more on the diverse nature of sex workers by providing information on what they call "diversity in the sex trade" (POWER, 2012). They address different identities in the sex trade, such as men, youth, racialized workers, etc. The discussion is focused on the relationship between sex workers and diversity, but does not account for the ways in which diverse identities interplay with each other or the impact of multiple marginalities on sex workers. This is similar on the Stella website as well. While they provide many resources for an array of sex workers, such as resources for sex workers with HIV/AIDs or transsexual and transvestite sex workers, their discussion of intersectionality is

limited. Instead, they problematize the many different labels by publishing an infosheet – *Language Matters* - focusing on the language used in discussing sex work and problematizing categorizations of sex workers.

While the discussion of the impacts of multiple marginalities are missing from the websites of POWER and Stella, the overall impression is given that the organizations represent sex workers from across the spectrum, both in terms of identities and types of sex work. This is evident in the ways in the organizations address who is welcome. For example, Stella lists that “all genders, all areas of sex work” are welcome (Stella, n.d.). POWER states that “all genders who self-identify as former or current sex workers, regardless of the industry sector in which they work” (POWER, n.d.). Finally, Maggie’s welcomes all sex workers and explicitly states that they recognize the different forms of oppression faced by workers, as discussed above.

The PACE website does not incorporate an intersectional feminist perspective, either in an outright discussion of intersectionality or in discussing diversity. This is not to say that perhaps PACE is not an intersectional organization, but that cannot be concluded in this study. It is to say, however, that they do not use their website as a site to incorporate an intersectional feminist perspective on advocacy work in targeting an almost exclusively non-sex working audience. This absence is problematic in two ways. If PACE in fact is an organization that embraces an intersectional feminist perspective, sex workers looking for support who come across the PACE website would not necessarily know that they are welcome or supported by the organization. Additionally, the organization does not educate its

non-sex working audience to the complex multiple forms of oppression possibly experienced by sex workers. As an advocacy organization, this lack of intersectional analysis and diverse representation results in a homogenous view of who sex workers are, perpetuating stereotypical assumptions associated with sex work.

6.0.3 Use of Websites and ICTs

In Chapter 5 I concluded that all four organizations were not realizing Stein's (2009) categories of assisting in action, mobilization, generating dialogue, and interaction to the best of their ability. The websites serve as static spaces of advocacy work. As I concluded, the increase in popularity of social media platforms could act as a supplementary site of activist work to the websites of these four organizations. The use of website to create action and mobilization and to engage in dialogue and interaction is underdeveloped.

There are two ways that the organization could enhance these two areas. Maggie's has a space on their website that is locked, accessible only by username and password provided by the organization. This section is used specifically for maintaining the no list: "The No List allows sex workers to share information and search clients before booking. It is secure and accessible by sex workers" (Maggie's, n.d.). In adopting this concept, the organizations can use secure, locked sections of their websites, members only, to create a safe space for members to interact. These locked venues could be used for organizing offline action, commenting on articles on the website, or just to interact with each other.

The other option is to embrace social media platforms. Social media has become a common way for people to enter online activism (Brodock et al., 2009

cited in Harlow, 2011). By embracing social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, the organizations would increase the reach of their agenda. While POWER and PACE have their Twitter feed embedded on their websites, and Maggie's, POWER, and PACE link to their respective platforms, the use of these platforms in conjunction with the websites is underutilized. For example, press releases or new posts could have a 'share' function, that allows for website visitors to directly share information from the organizations on their Facebook or Twitter accounts instantly. As well, the already existing links to the Facebook pages of the organizations are small or hidden. By having the links visible and present, users would be encouraged to connect with the organizations on social media platforms.

6.1.0 Limitations

Due to the size and the scope of this project, the results in this thesis do not claim to reflect the perspective of all sex worker right's organizations in Canada or the inherent successes of using ICT's in activist or advocacy work. Having recognized this limitation, my analysis does cover the largest sex workers rights organizations in Canada and drew from those in major cities. As well, as my data was drawn from static content online, and therefore doing a website analysis, per say, does not provide clarification on what the organizations intended to say.

Finally, the organizations have the ability to change and update their website at any given time and this timing is beyond my control as a researcher. Some of the websites were being updated with news during the research period, and that content was then analyzed as part of this thesis, however nearing the end of the research period the website of PACE changed its format entirely. Thus, as with all

website analysis, and almost all forms of data collection, this research reflects one moment in time.

6.2.0 New Directions in Legislating Sex Work

Conceived in response to the Supreme Court of Canada decision, the Government of Canada has introduced a new bill, Bill C-36, in May 2014, coinciding with the summation of this research. Justice Minister Peter MacKay introduced The Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (Bill C-36). Bill C-36, which is being touted by the Conservative government as implanting safer conditions for sex workers while working to end the sex trade in Canada (The Canadian Press, 2014; Urback, 2014; Wingrove, 2014), targets the customers of sex workers by criminalizing the purchase of sexual services (Wingrove, 2014). As well, sex workers are targeted as this bill aims to make illegal the discussion or advertisement of sexual services in specific areas, such as in print and online (Urback, 2014; Wingrove, 2014), especially any area in which it is reasonably expected that a child could be present (Urback, 2014). The Conservative government purports that this bill will protect sex workers from harm and exploitation allegedly cause by Johns and pimps (Urback, 2014). At the time of press, Bill C-36 was being debated in the Senate.

Informed by the research I have conducted on sex worker right's organizations in Canada, I suggest that Bill C-36 is incredibly problematic and will put sex workers at risk for harm. Bill C-36 poses a great threat to sex workers and sex worker rights organizations. In light of the successes of Bedford at the Supreme

Court of Canada, and upon reflection of the impending decision regarding the future of prostitution legislation in Canada, further research on the direction of sex work legislation is needed. As well, should Bill C-36 pass, researchers and sex worker rights organizations alike will need to document the consequences of such legislation.

6.3.0 Research Expansion

As a social science researcher, it is my responsibility to produce a thesis that addresses my beliefs as a researcher but also represents the organizations that I have committed to researching. I have done my best to accurately interpret and represent the data from the websites of Maggie's, POWER, PACE and Stella. Additionally, in abiding by the first goal of Whitmore et al's (2011) purpose of using an appreciative inquiry framework, I have critically reflected on the findings of this thesis and will provide the four organizations with a digital copy of this thesis so they can reflect on my findings as well, should they chose. While the research I have conducted in this thesis addresses the gap in the literature I have identified in the first chapter, there is still much work to be done in the future.

The original intention of my research was to interview sex workers involved with these organizations to examine how they perceive their role as activists, but given their busy schedules, this research was not possible. Interviewing sex workers would provide a unique perspective that is grounded in their lived experiences and stories about their activism work.

Additionally, having interaction and dialogue and generating action and mobilization on a website itself is not occurring for these organizations. I suggested that the shift in popularity from chat rooms and message boards to social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook account for the weak support for these two categories on the websites. Future research could study the changing nature of activist and advocacy work through the use of social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook.

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